



ALEX ALICE

# SIEGFRIED

TM













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# SIEGFRIED™

SIEGFRIED VOLUME ONE  
01 | PART ONE



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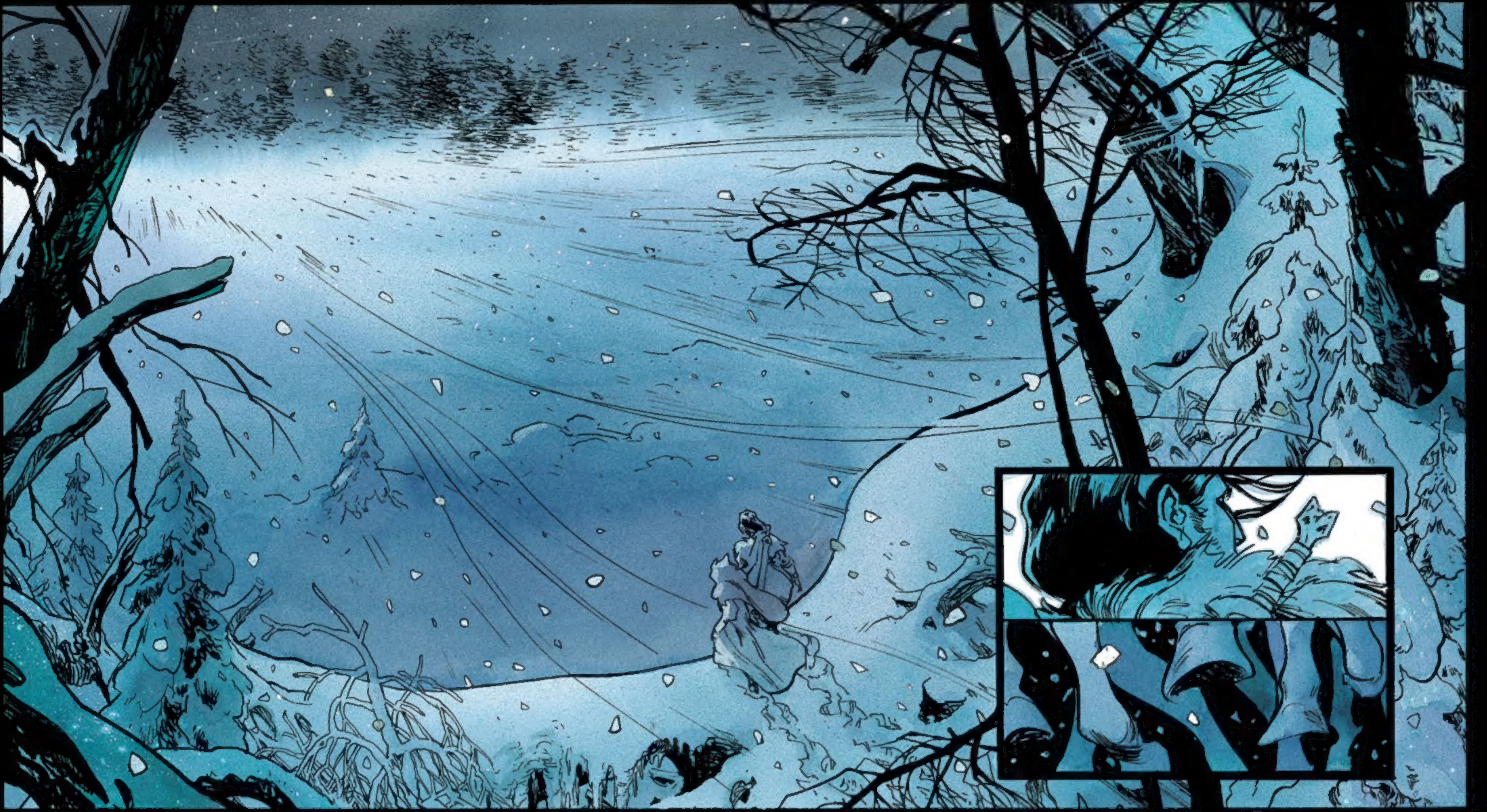


OVERTURE

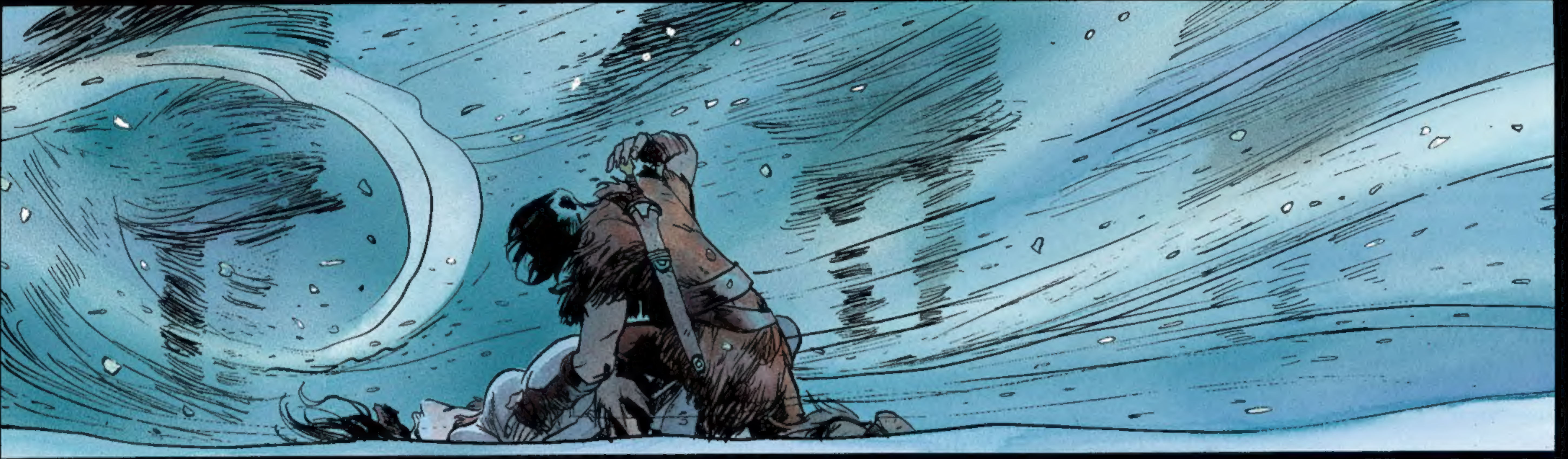




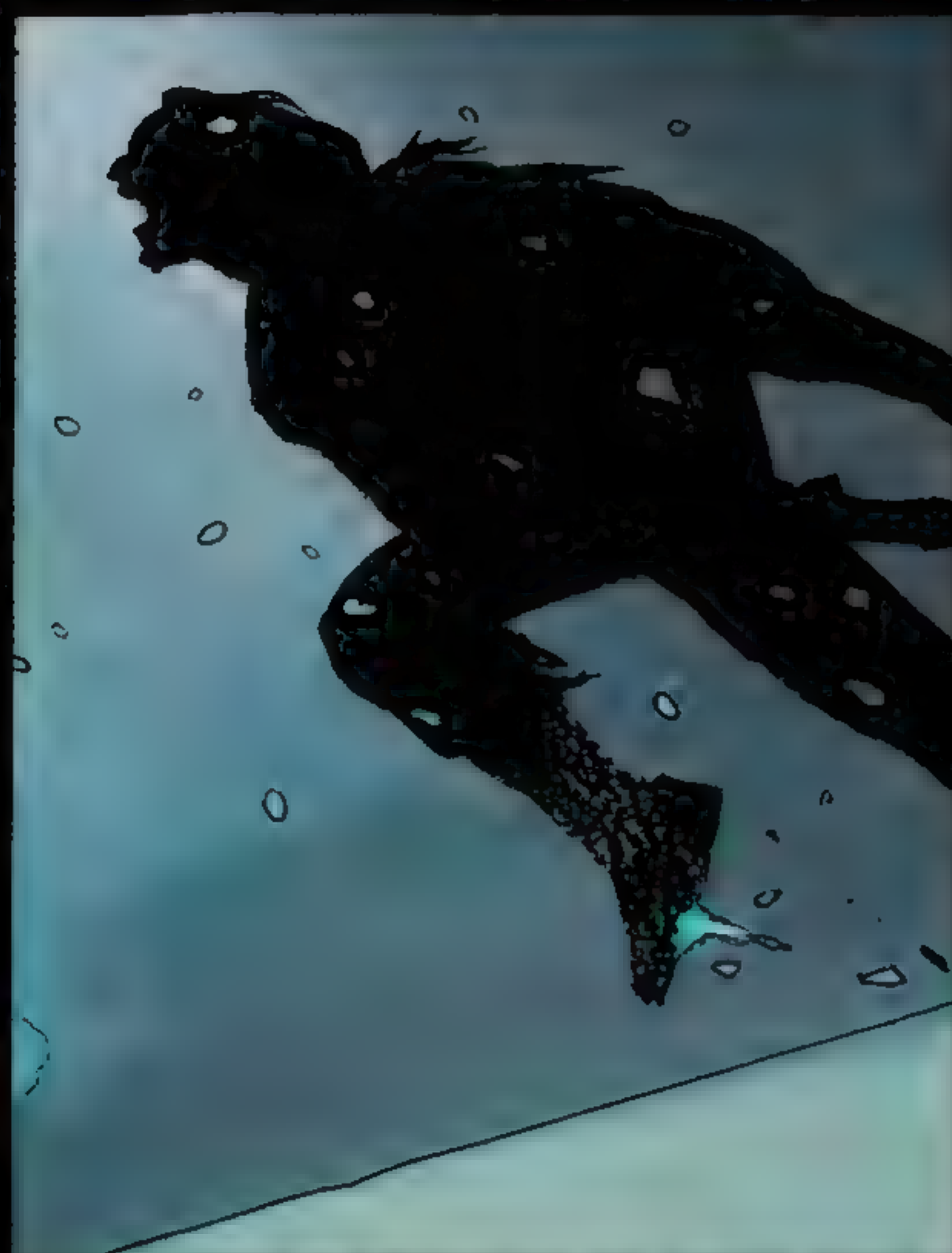
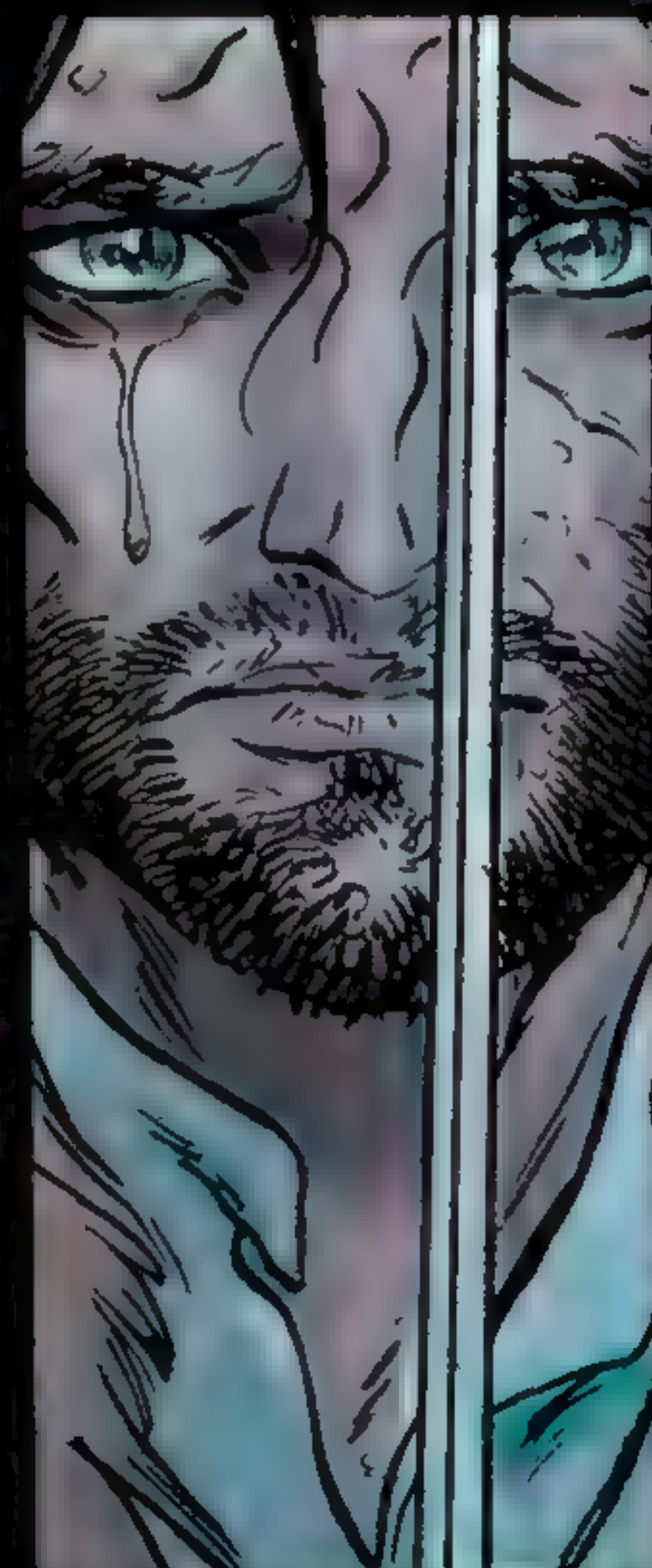
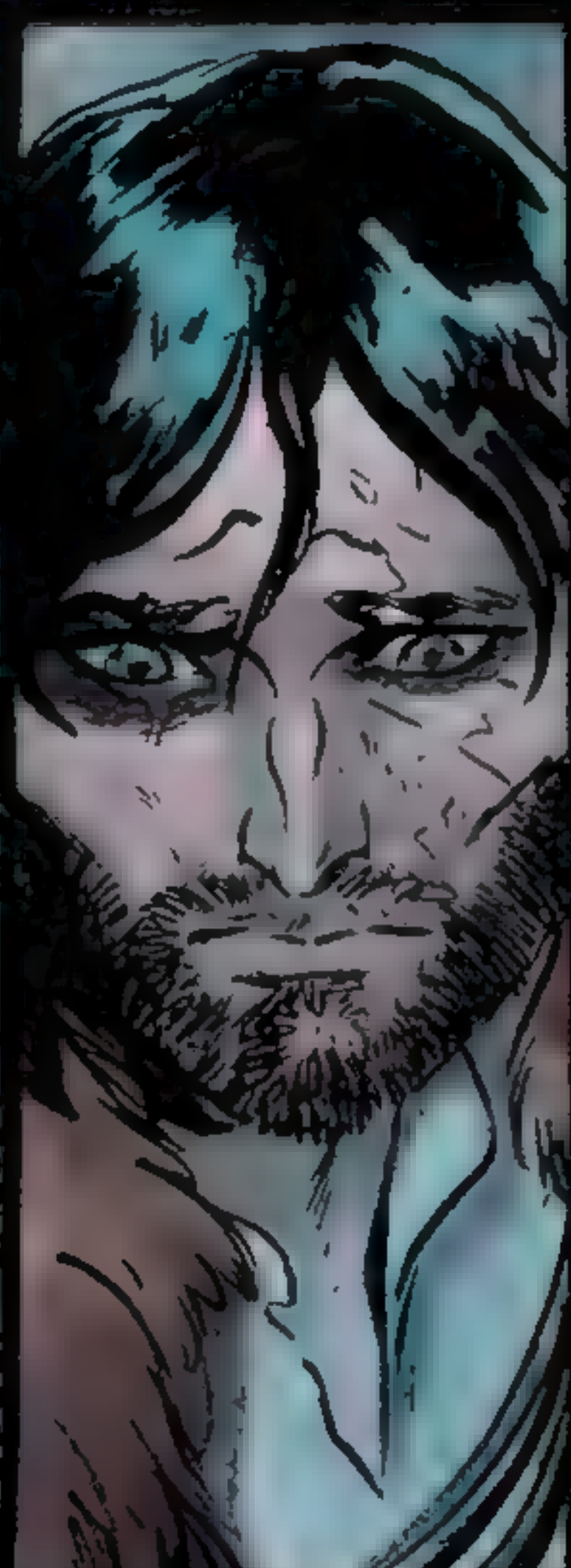




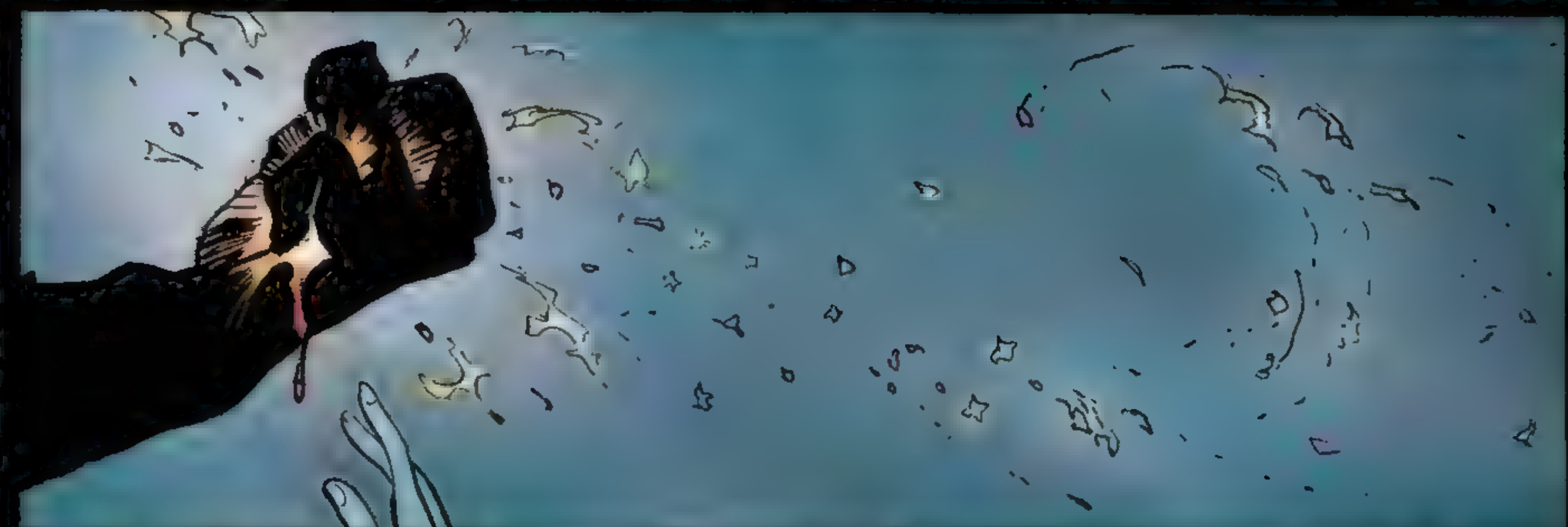
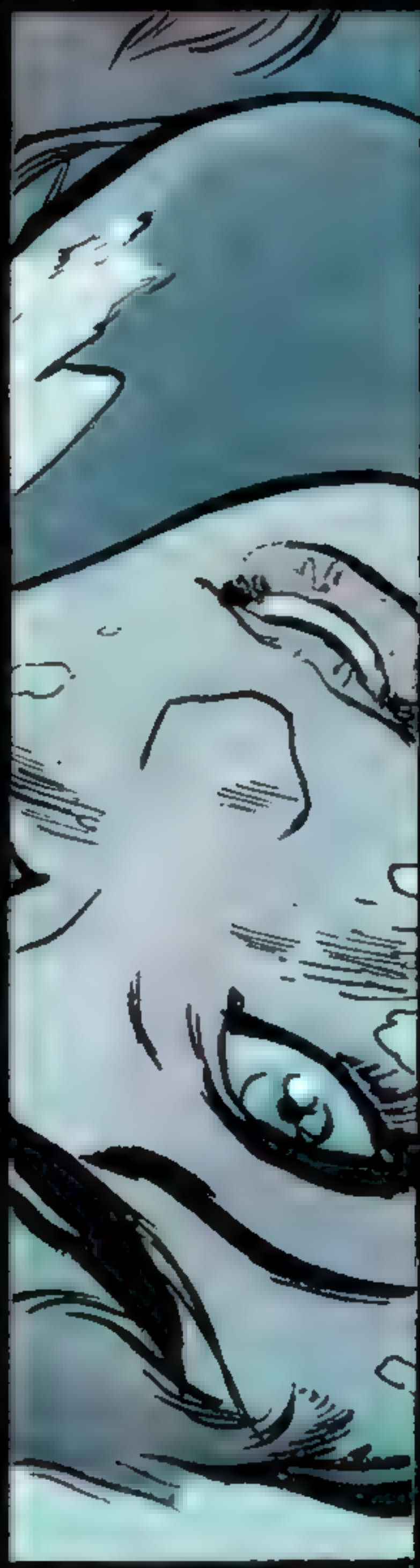
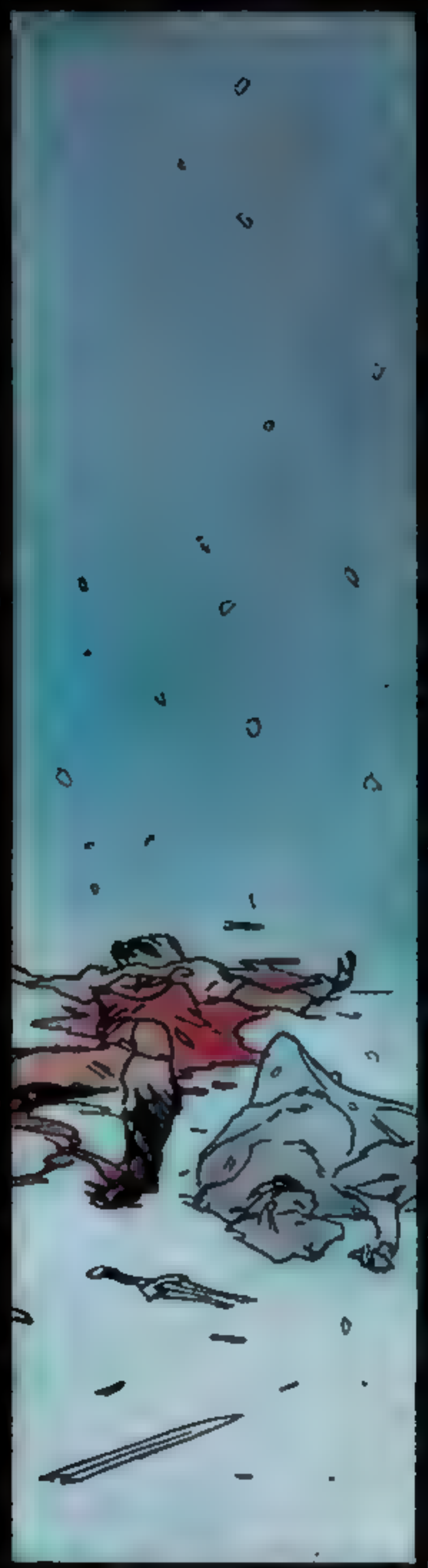
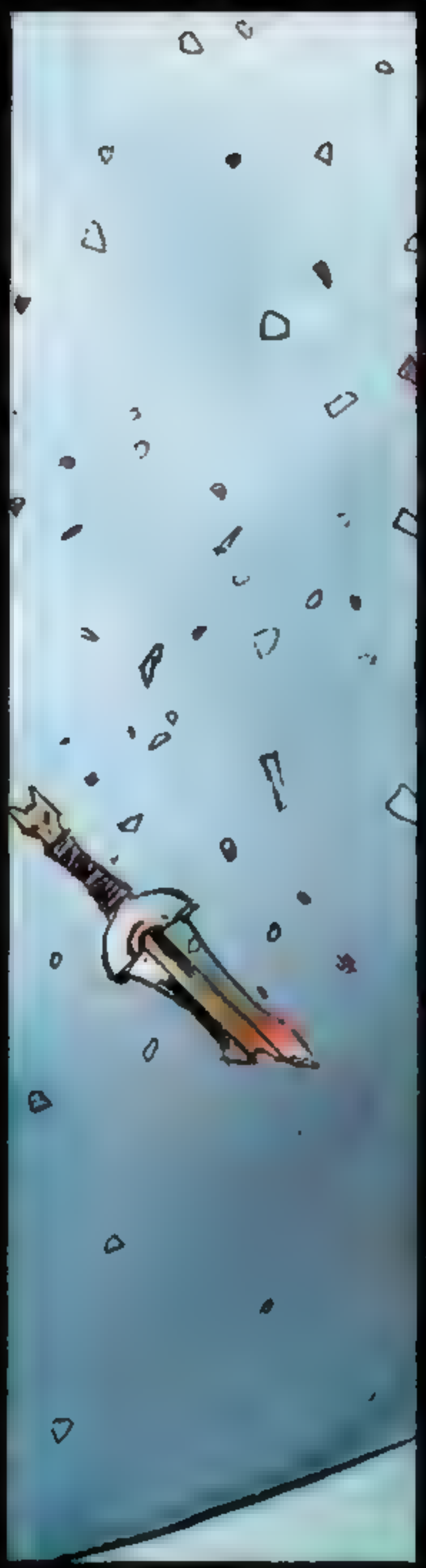
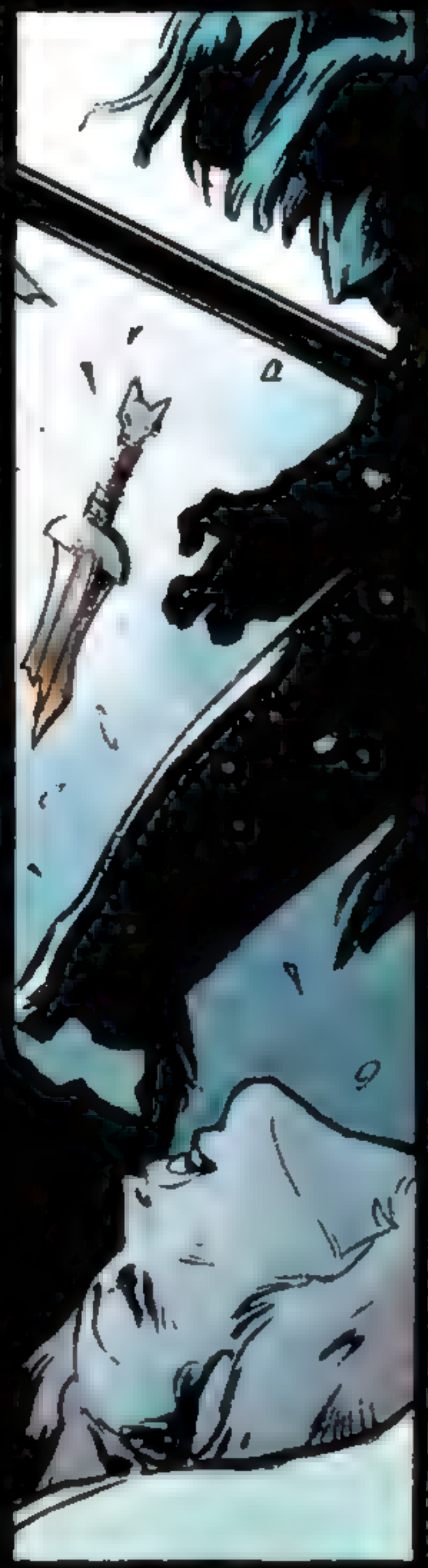




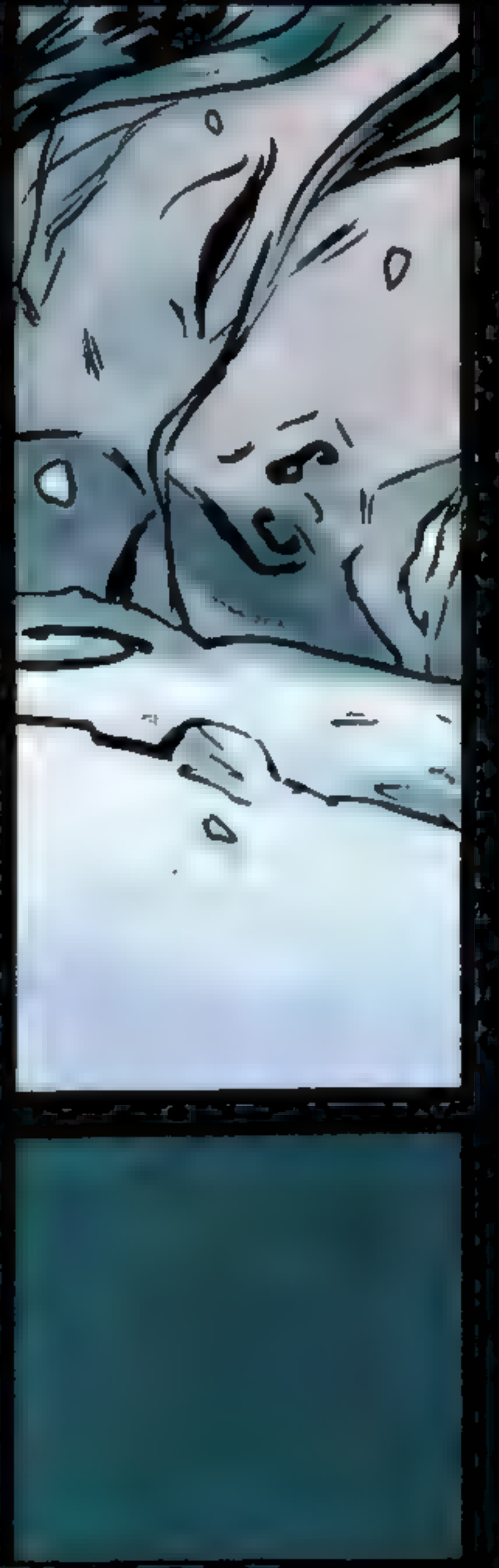
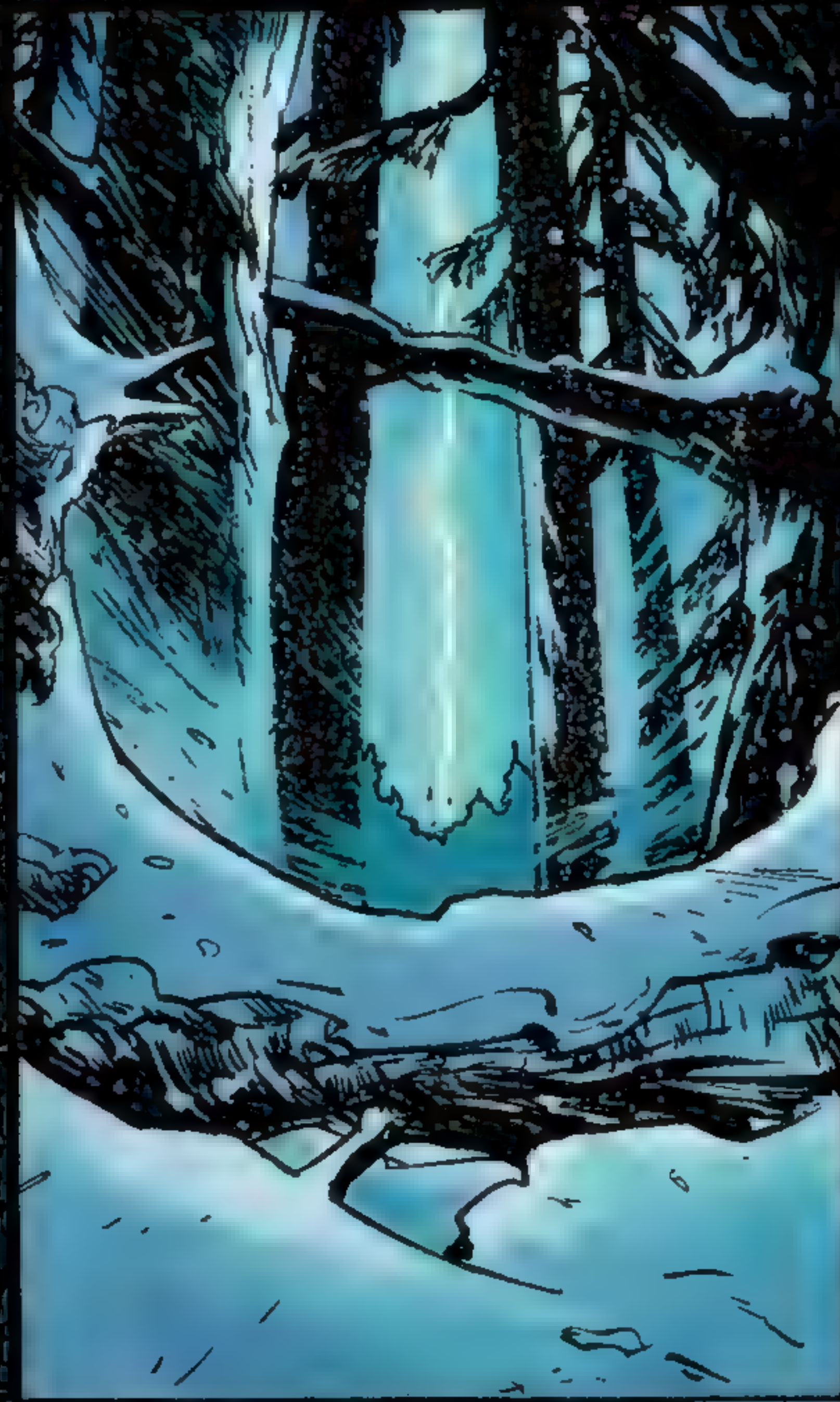
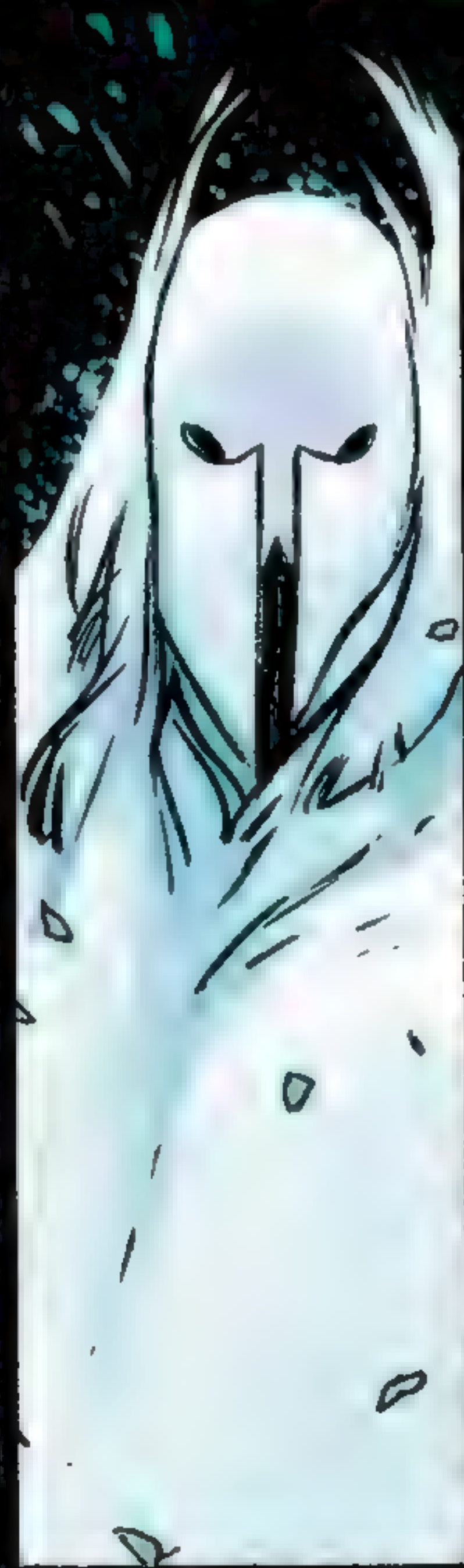
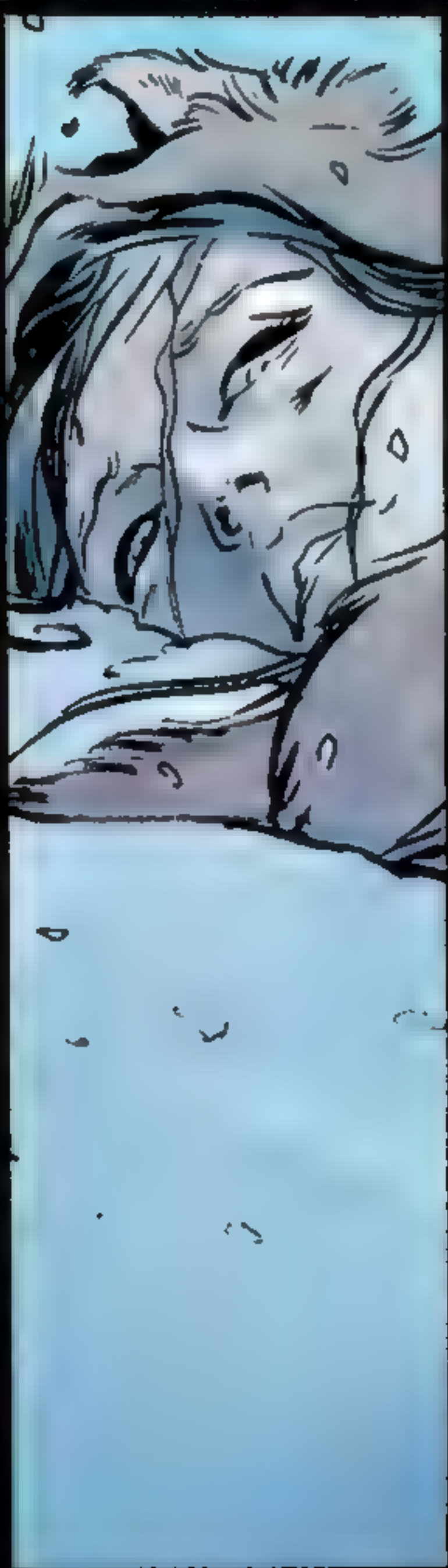
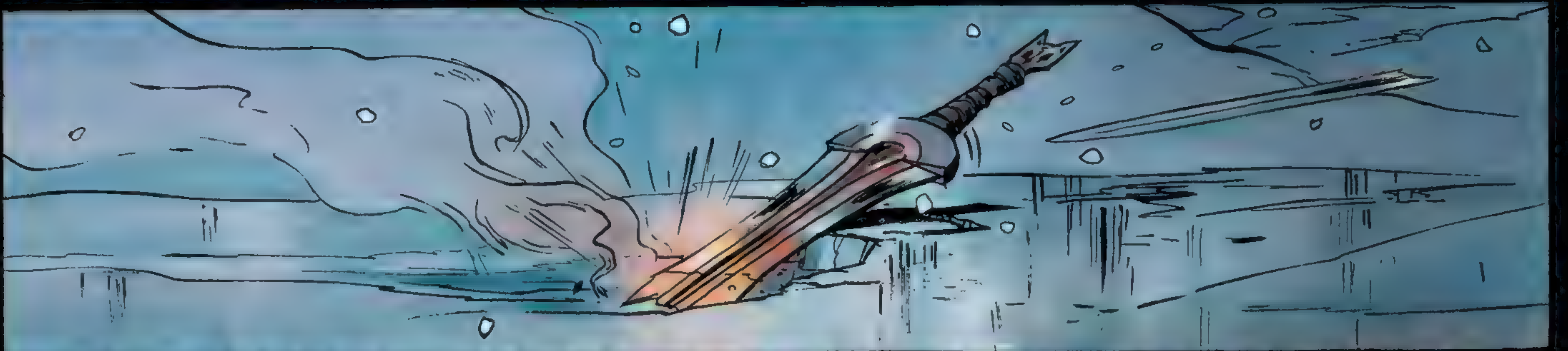
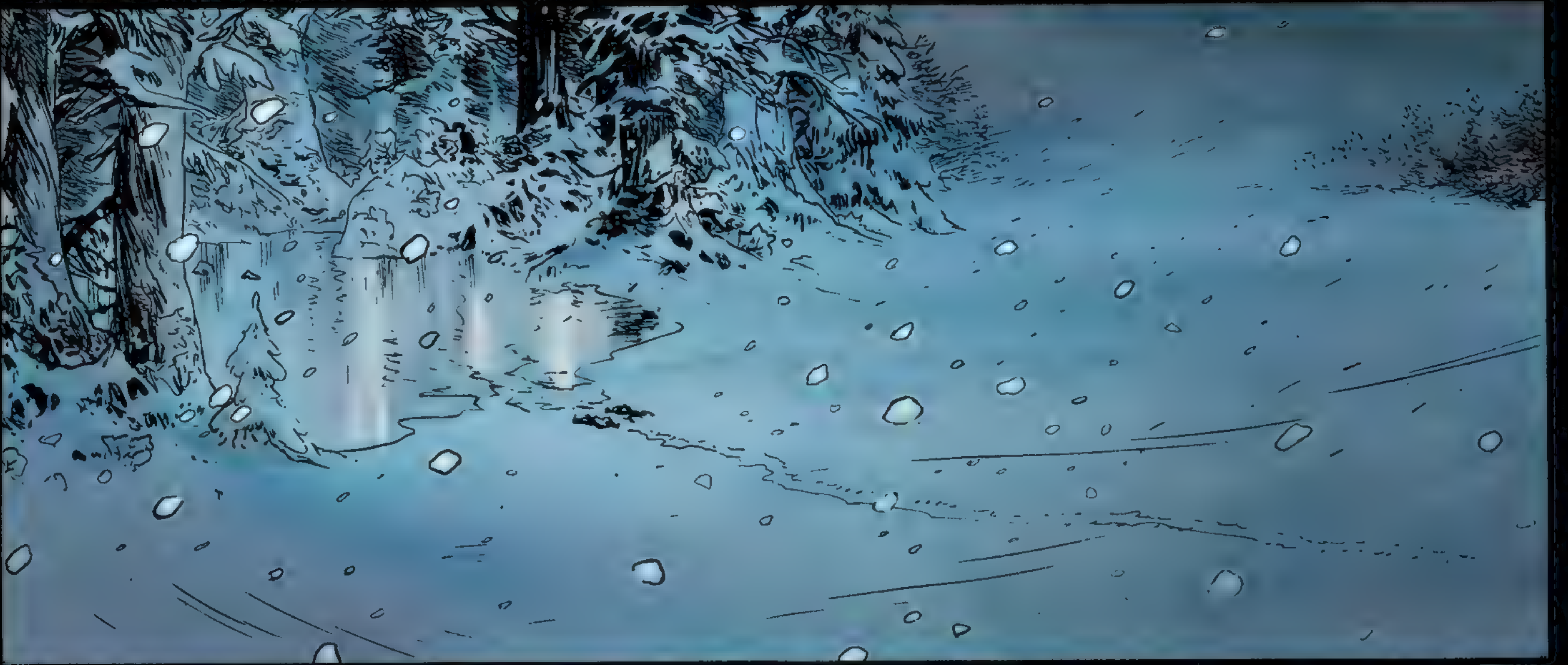
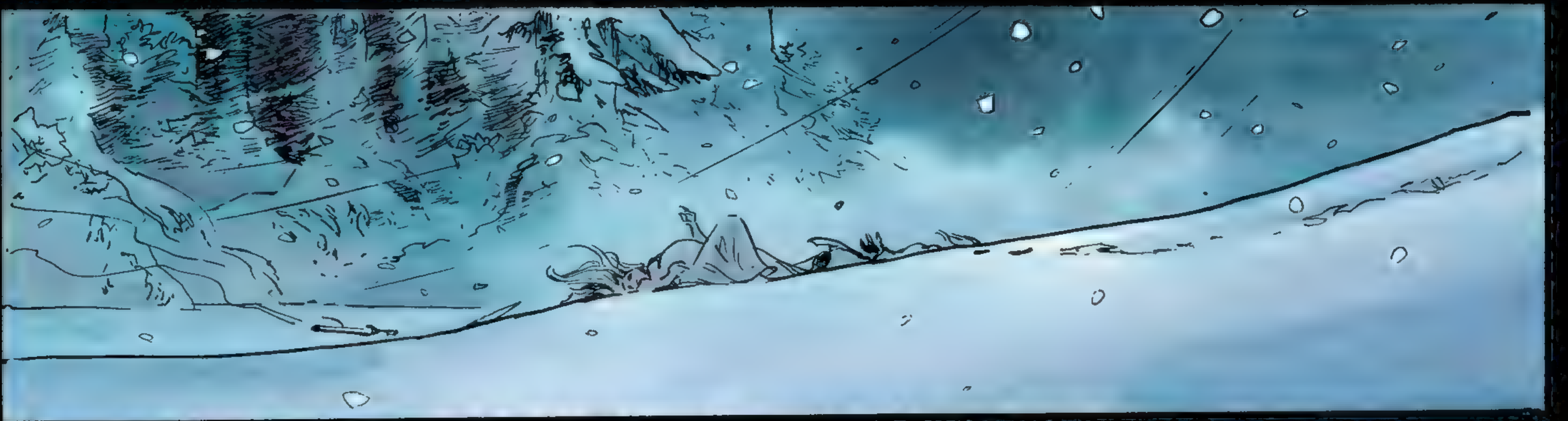
















ALEX ALICE

# SIEGFRIED.



WHAT DO  
YOU SEE?

NOTHING.



GUESS  
AGAIN.

NOTHING!

...

DARKNESS?

THAT'S WHERE IT BEGINS.  
FROM HERE YOU CAN WATCH  
THE UNFOLDING WORLD.  
FROM BEGINNING TO END.

HERE, LOOK AT  
THE END.

IT'S  
EXACTLY  
THE  
SAME!

SEEP WHY  
BOTHER, EHP?

YOU ARE  
PLAYING  
WITH ME...

I THOUGHT GODS  
LOVED PLAYING  
GAMES!

DO YOU  
KNOW  
WHY I'M  
HERE?

I KNOW  
ALL.

THEN  
YOU MUST  
KNOW THAT  
TIME IS SHORT.  
TELL ME OF  
HIM.

WHO?  
SIEGFRIED?



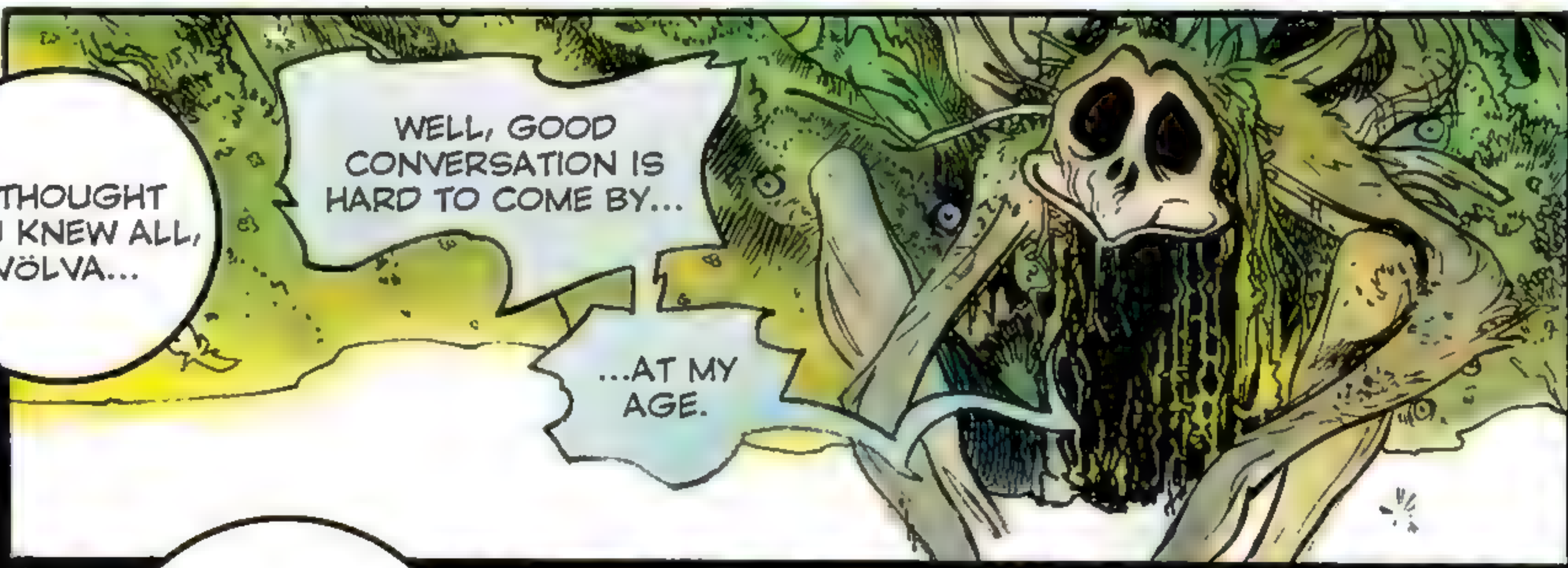


WHO ELSE?

HOW ABOUT TELLING ME WHAT YOU'RE AFTER?



I THOUGHT YOU KNEW ALL, VÖLVA...



WELL, GOOD CONVERSATION IS HARD TO COME BY...

...AT MY AGE.



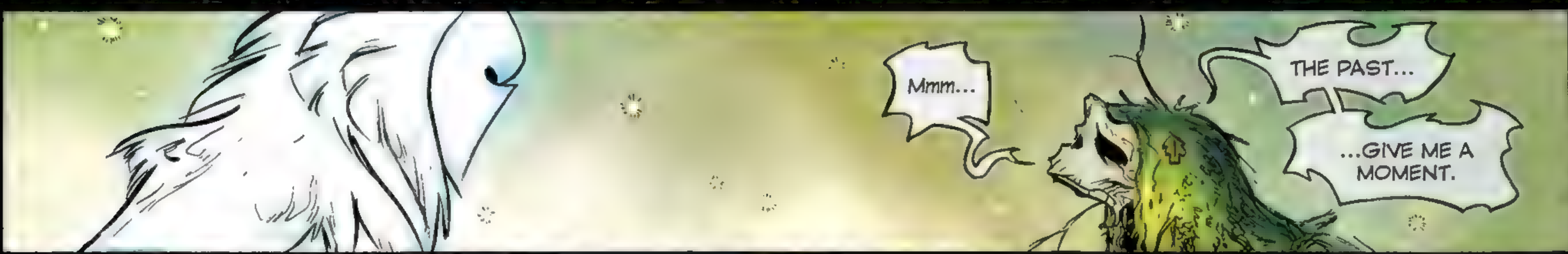
I WANT TO KNOW IF SIEGFRIED HAS A CHANCE OF PREVAILING.



NO, THE PAST WILL SUFFICE ME.

SO YOU WANT THE FUTURE?  
THAT CARRIES A HEFTY PRICE, YOU KNOW!

GOOD! THAT'S FREE OF CHARGE.  
WHAT IF SIEGFRIED PROVES UNEQUAL TO THE TASK?



Mmm...

THE PAST...  
...GIVE ME A MOMENT.



?!?

AH, HERE WE ARE!

WELL, YOU KNOW THE BEGINNING.

DARKNESS.  
THE VOID.

THEN...





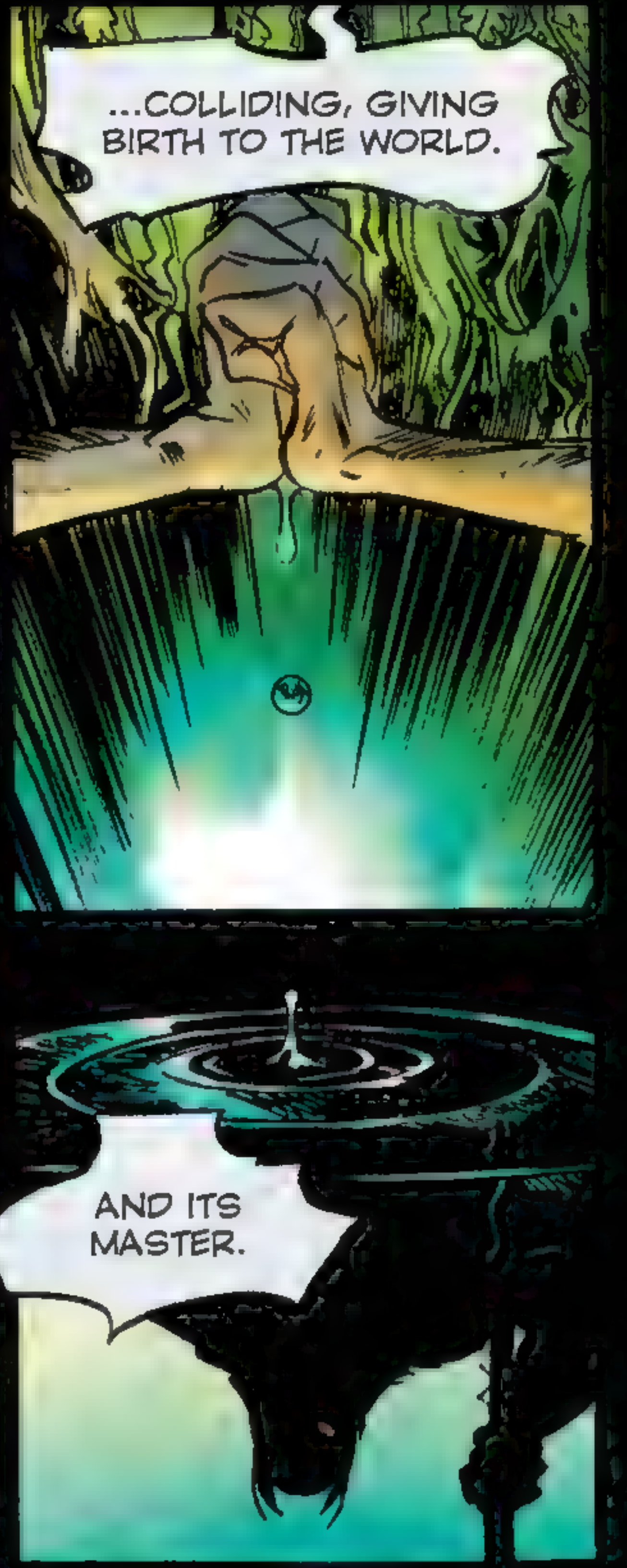
...THE  
ABYSS.

SURROUNDED  
BY...



...AN  
OCEAN OF  
FLAMES.

A DESERT  
OF ICE...



...COLLIDING, GIVING  
BIRTH TO THE WORLD.

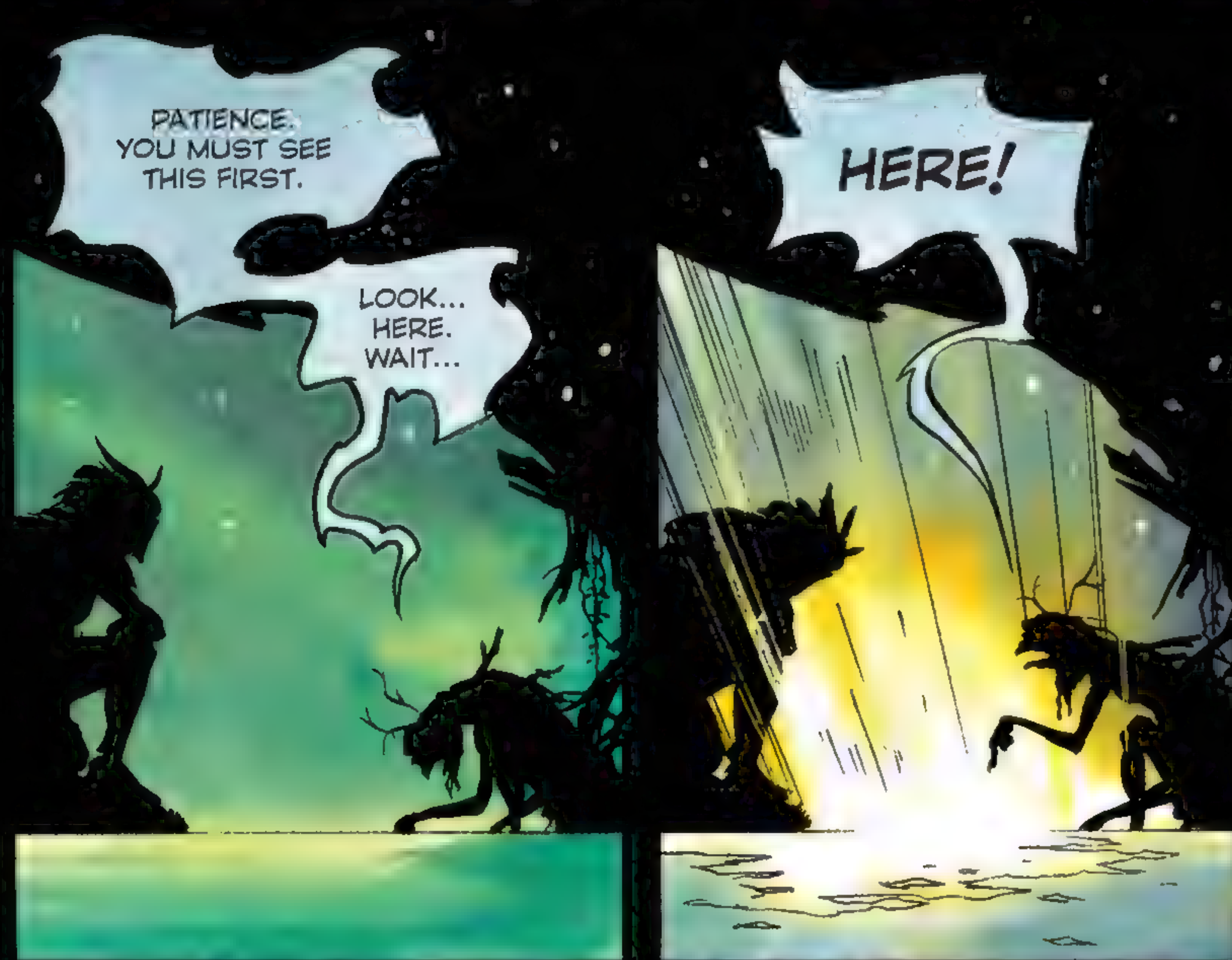
AND ITS  
MASTER.



WAIT...  
STOP.

DIDN'T YOU  
ASK FOR THE  
PAST?

YES!  
SIEGFRIED'S!



PATIENCE,  
YOU MUST SEE  
THIS FIRST.

LOOK...  
HERE.  
WAIT...

HERE!



THE SEED OF  
ALL WOE...

...IT SHINES, BUT  
SHEDS NO LIGHT.

GLIMMERS,  
YET HOLDS  
NO HEAT.



GOLD.

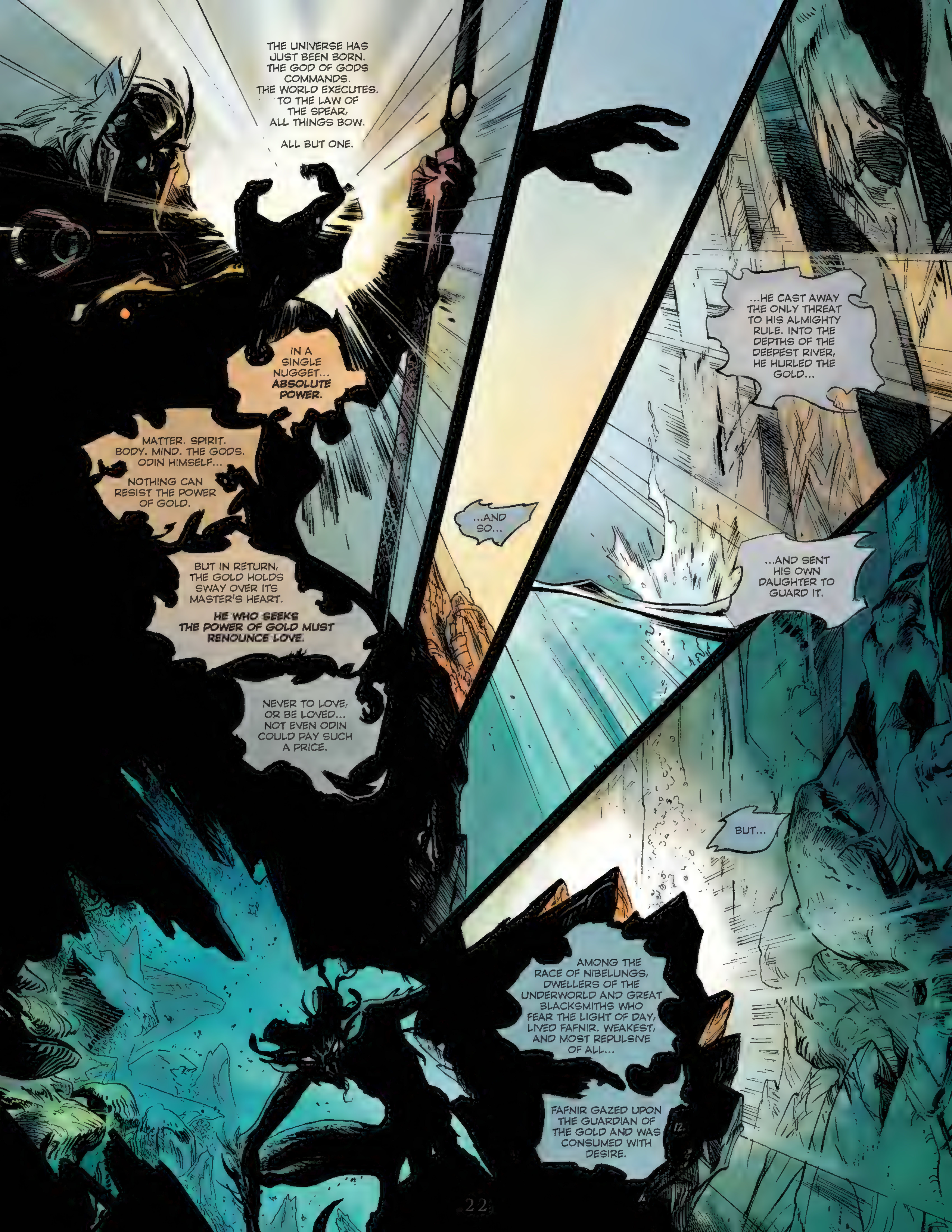


YES...  
IT HAS  
EXISTED  
FOREVER...

...SINCE THE  
DAWN OF  
TIME.

WHEN ODIN  
TOOK THE  
EARTH AS HIS  
BRIDE!





THE UNIVERSE HAS  
JUST BEEN BORN.  
THE GOD OF GODS  
COMMANDS.  
THE WORLD EXECUTES.  
TO THE LAW OF  
THE SPEAR,  
ALL THINGS BOW.  
ALL BUT ONE.

IN A  
SINGLE  
NUGGET...  
ABSOLUTE  
POWER.

MATTER. SPIRIT.  
BODY. MIND. THE GODS.  
ODIN HIMSELF...

NOTHING CAN  
RESIST THE POWER  
OF GOLD.

BUT IN RETURN,  
THE GOLD HOLDS  
SWAY OVER ITS  
MASTER'S HEART.

HE WHO SEEKS  
THE POWER OF GOLD MUST  
RENOUNCE LOVE.

NEVER TO LOVE,  
OR BE LOVED...  
NOT EVEN ODIN  
COULD PAY SUCH  
A PRICE.

...AND  
SO...

...HE CAST AWAY  
THE ONLY THREAT  
TO HIS ALMIGHTY  
RULE. INTO THE  
DEPTHS OF THE  
DEEPEST RIVER,  
HE HURLED THE  
GOLD...

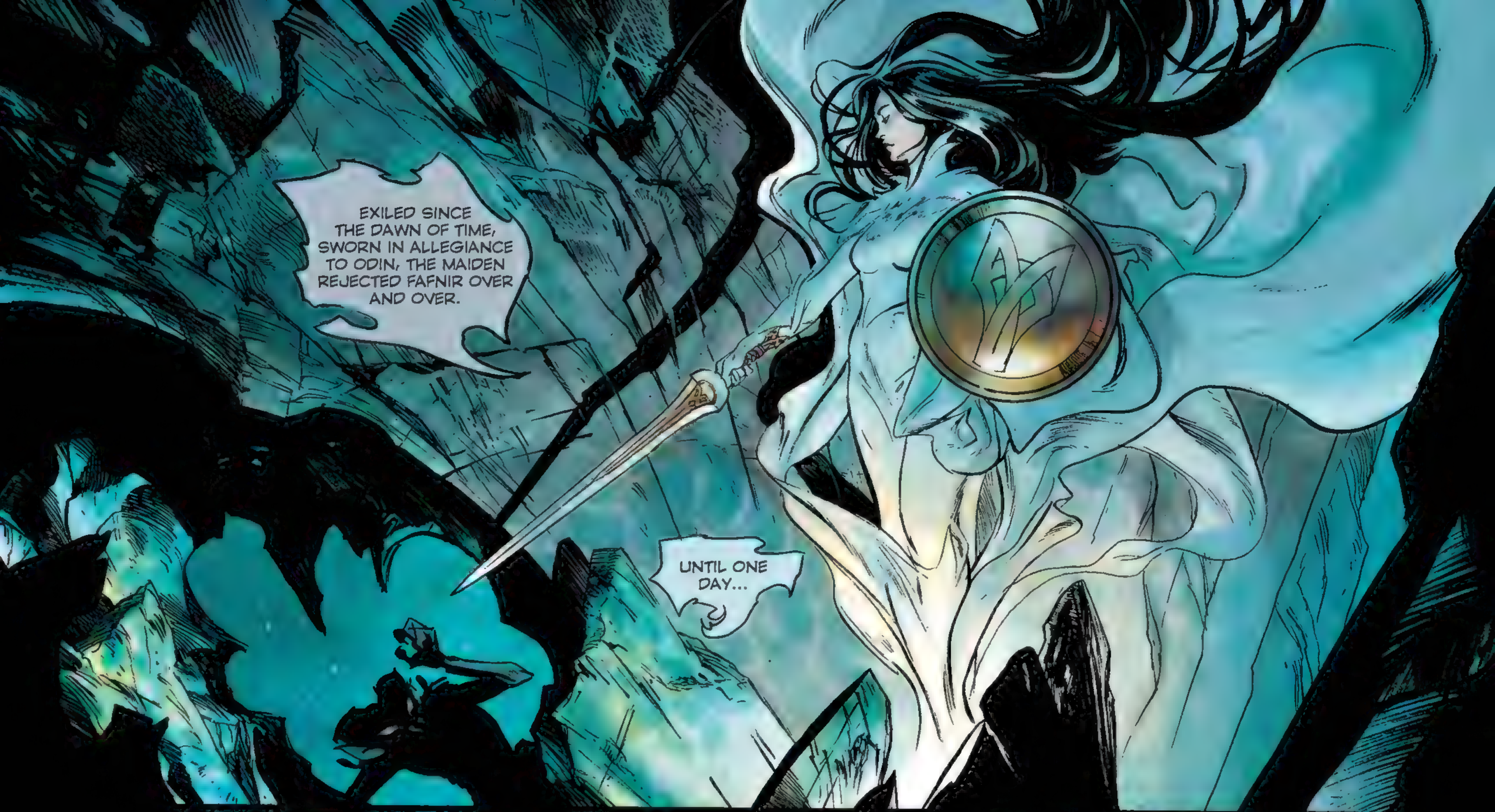
...AND SENT  
HIS OWN  
DAUGHTER TO  
GUARD IT.

BUT...

AMONG THE  
RACE OF NIBELUNGS,  
DWELLERS OF THE  
UNDERWORLD AND GREAT  
BLACKSMITHS WHO  
FEAR THE LIGHT OF DAY,  
LIVED FAFNIR. WEAKEST,  
AND MOST REPULSIVE  
OF ALL...

FAFNIR GAZED UPON  
THE GUARDIAN OF  
THE GOLD AND WAS  
CONSUMED WITH  
DESIRE.



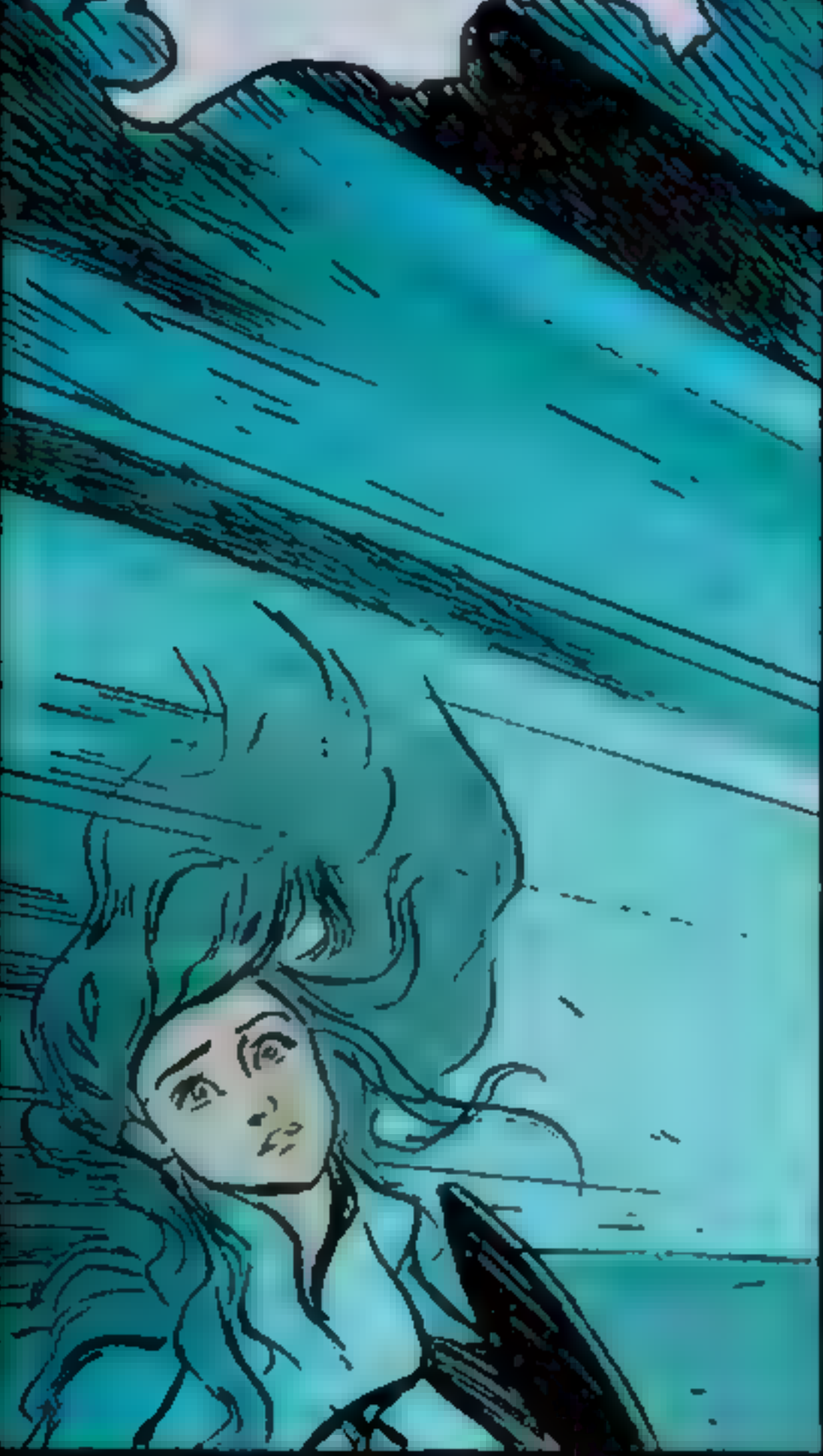
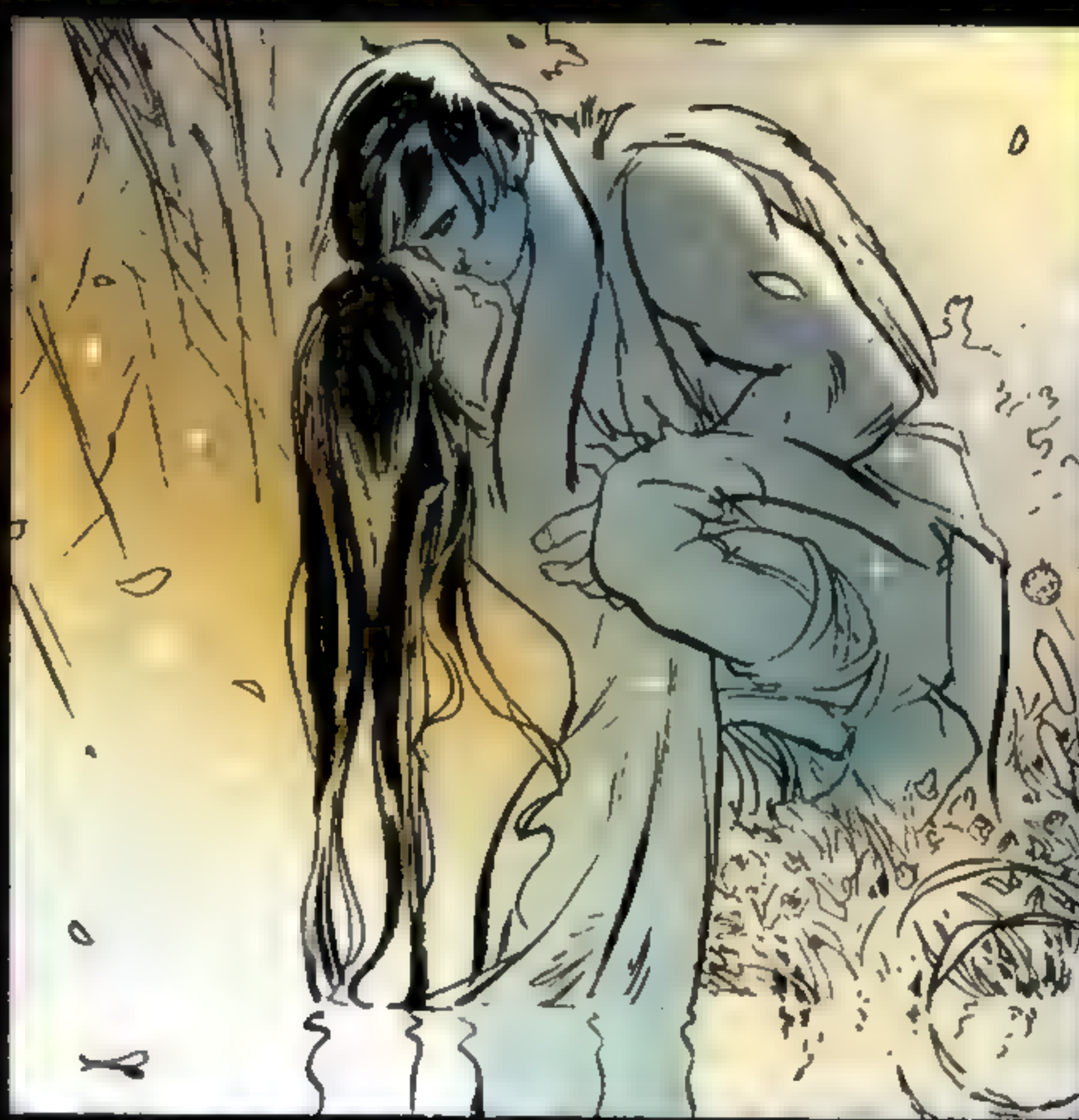
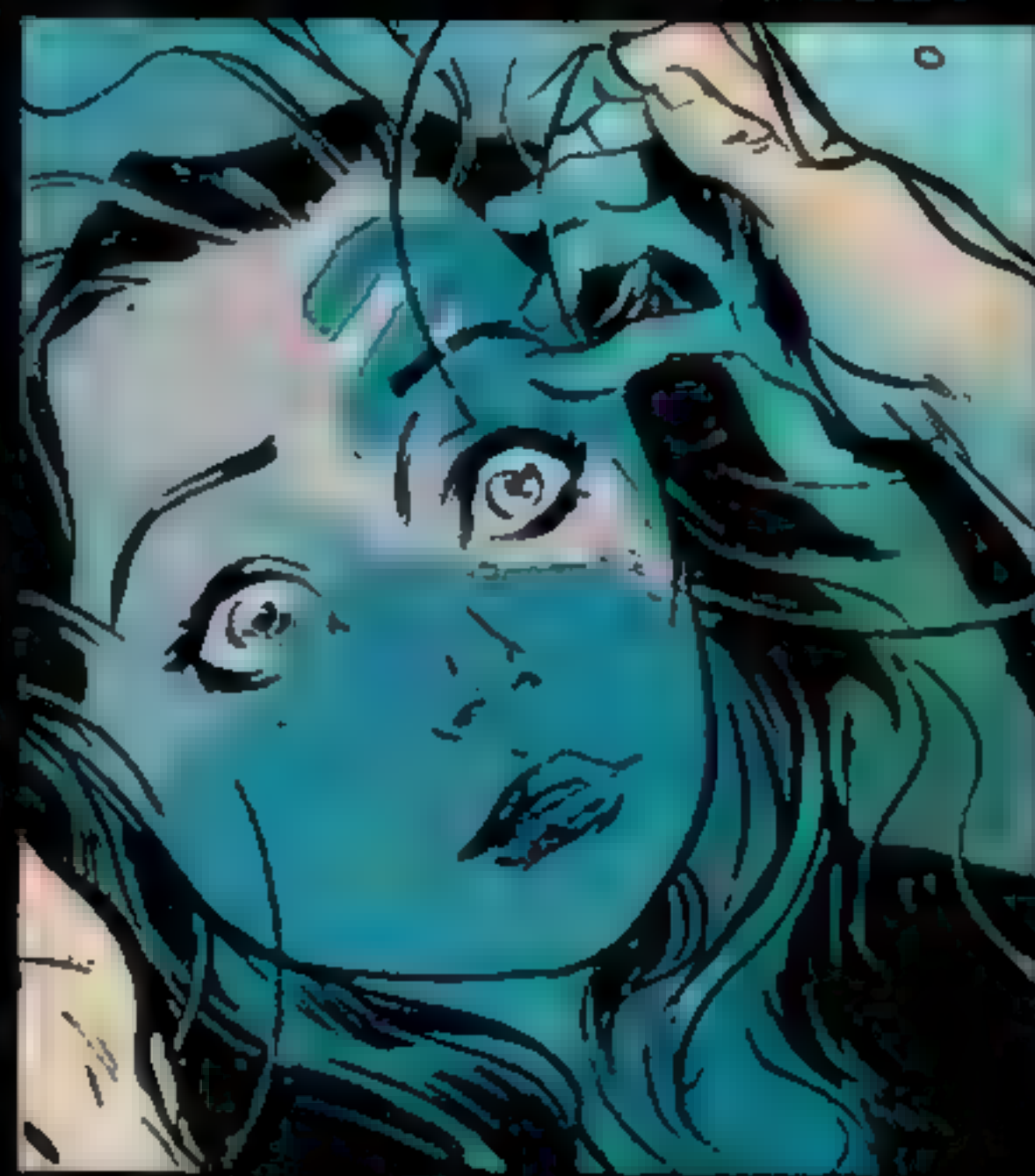


EXILED SINCE  
THE DAWN OF TIME,  
SWORN IN ALLEGIANCE  
TO ODIN, THE MAIDEN  
REJECTED FAFNIR OVER  
AND OVER.

UNTIL ONE  
DAY...



SOMETHING  
OCCURRED THAT  
ODIN HAD NOT  
FORSEEN.



HIS  
HEART NOW  
SHATTERED,  
FAFNIR CURSED  
LOVE.



HE STOLE THE GOLD AWAY.



ODIN CHASED  
THE LOVERS TO  
THE EDGE OF THE  
WORLD...

...YOU WERE  
THERE WHEN  
THEY FELL.

AS FOR FAFNIR...



THE VERY EARTH TREMBLED. OUTSIDE THE THRONE CHAMBER, THE NIBELUNGS' WORLD BEGAN TO CRUMBLE...

...FAFNIR COMMANDED MIMÉ, THE FINEST BLACKSMITH, TO FORGE THE GOLD INTO AN INSTRUMENT OF POWER...

...AND ENSLAVEMENT.

FAFNIR... CHANGED.

ROAMING THE WORLD, USING MAGIC, HE INDULGED HIMSELF... IN EVERY PLEASURE.

BUT PLEASURE IS NOT LOVE. AND FAFNIR, WEARY OF HIS PERVERSE WAYS, RETREATED INTO THE DEPTHS OF HIS REALM...

...AND WENT MAD.

WHEN THE TREMORS CEASED, THE BLACKSMITH WAS SENT DOWN TO THE THRONE CHAMBER.

BUT FAFNIR THE NIBELUNG WAS NO MORE.


WHATEVER HAD BORED INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH AND SLITHERED INTO THE ABYSS...

...THAT THING HAD BECOME...

MONSTROUS.



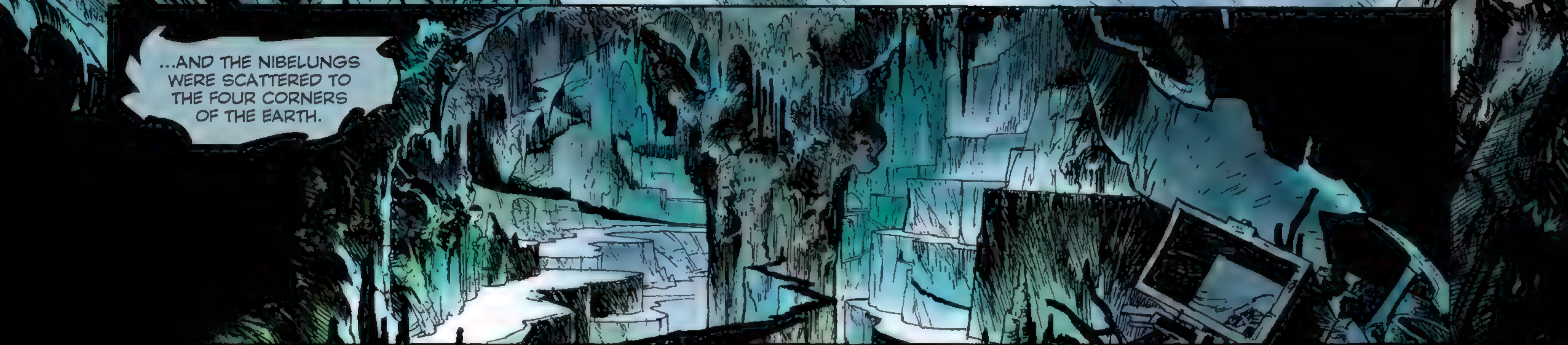




FAFNIR NOW  
ABIDES IN THE DEEPEST  
DARKNESS, ALONE  
WITH HIS POWER...

...HIS DOOM...

...HIS  
GOLD...



...AND THE NIBELUNGS  
WERE SCATTERED TO  
THE FOUR CORNERS  
OF THE EARTH.

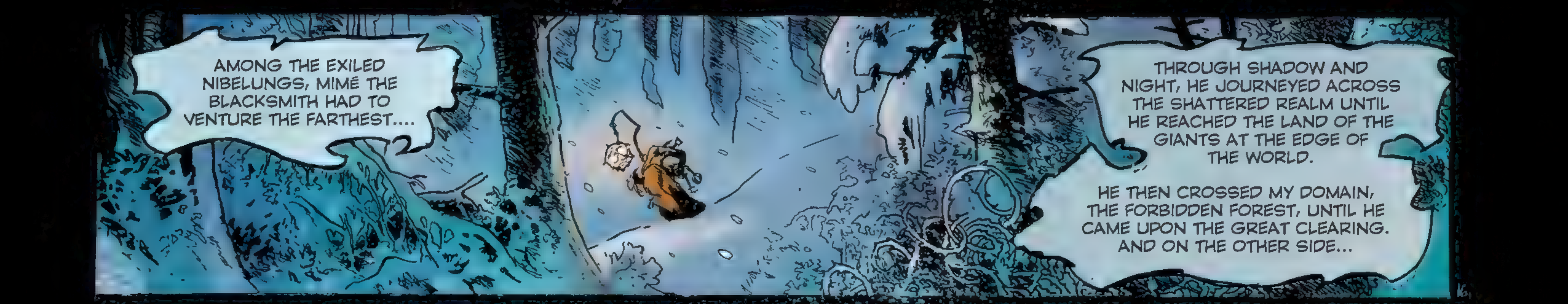
RIGHT!

SO, YOU KNOW ABOUT  
THE GOLD, FAFNIR AND  
MIMÉ THE BLACKSMITH.  
NOW...

WHAT WAS IT  
YOU WANTED?

**SIEGFRIED!**

AH, YES...



AMONG THE EXILED  
NIBELUNGS, MIMÉ THE  
BLACKSMITH HAD TO  
VENTURE THE FARTHEST....

THROUGH SHADOW AND  
NIGHT, HE JOURNEYED ACROSS  
THE SHATTERED REALM UNTIL  
HE REACHED THE LAND OF THE  
GIANTS AT THE EDGE OF  
THE WORLD.

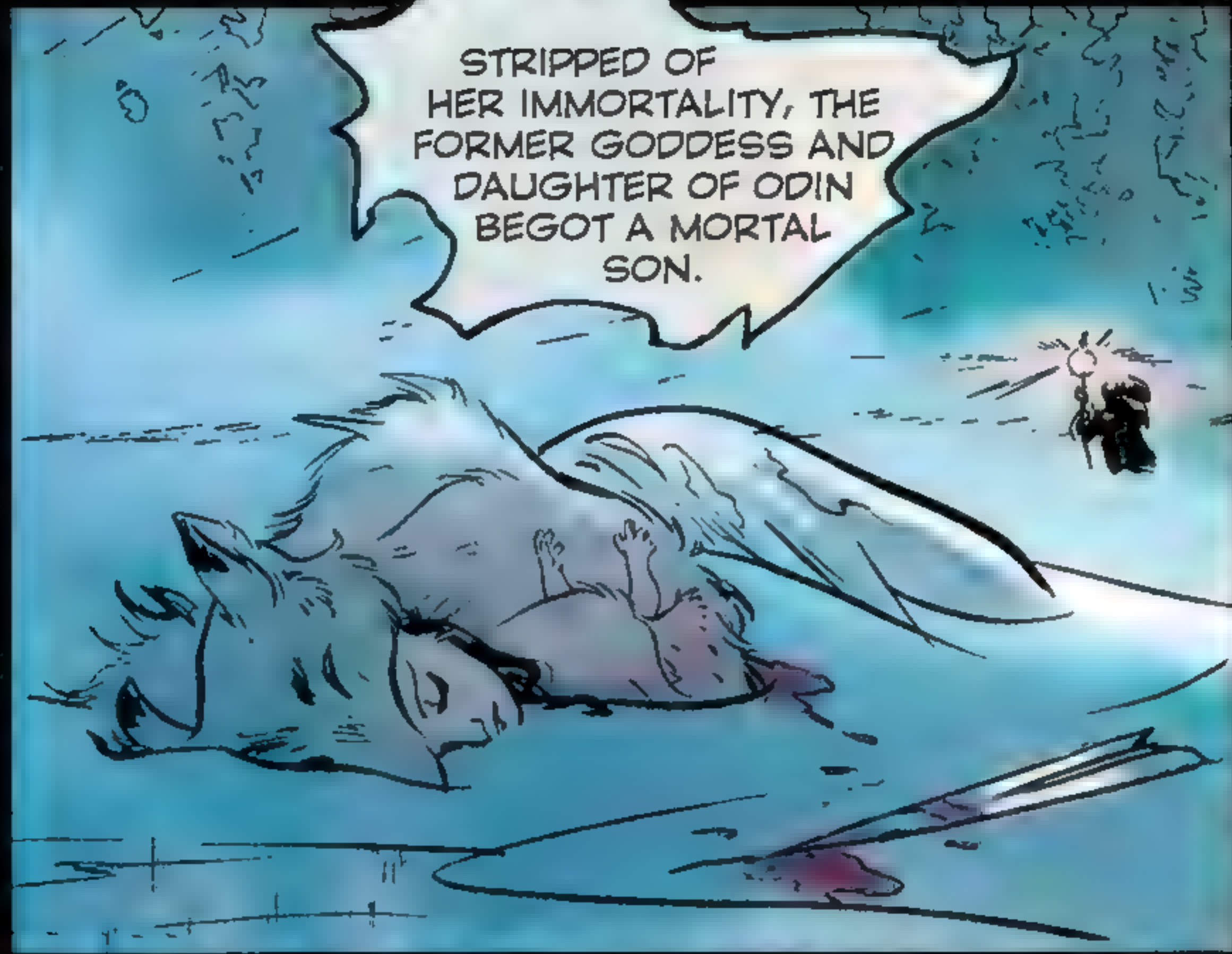
HE THEN CROSSED MY DOMAIN,  
THE FORBIDDEN FOREST, UNTIL HE  
CAME UPON THE GREAT CLEARING.  
AND ON THE OTHER SIDE...





...THE GREAT EASTERN FOREST.

THERE...



STRIPPED OF HER IMMORTALITY, THE FORMER GODDESS AND DAUGHTER OF ODIN BEGOT A MORTAL SON.

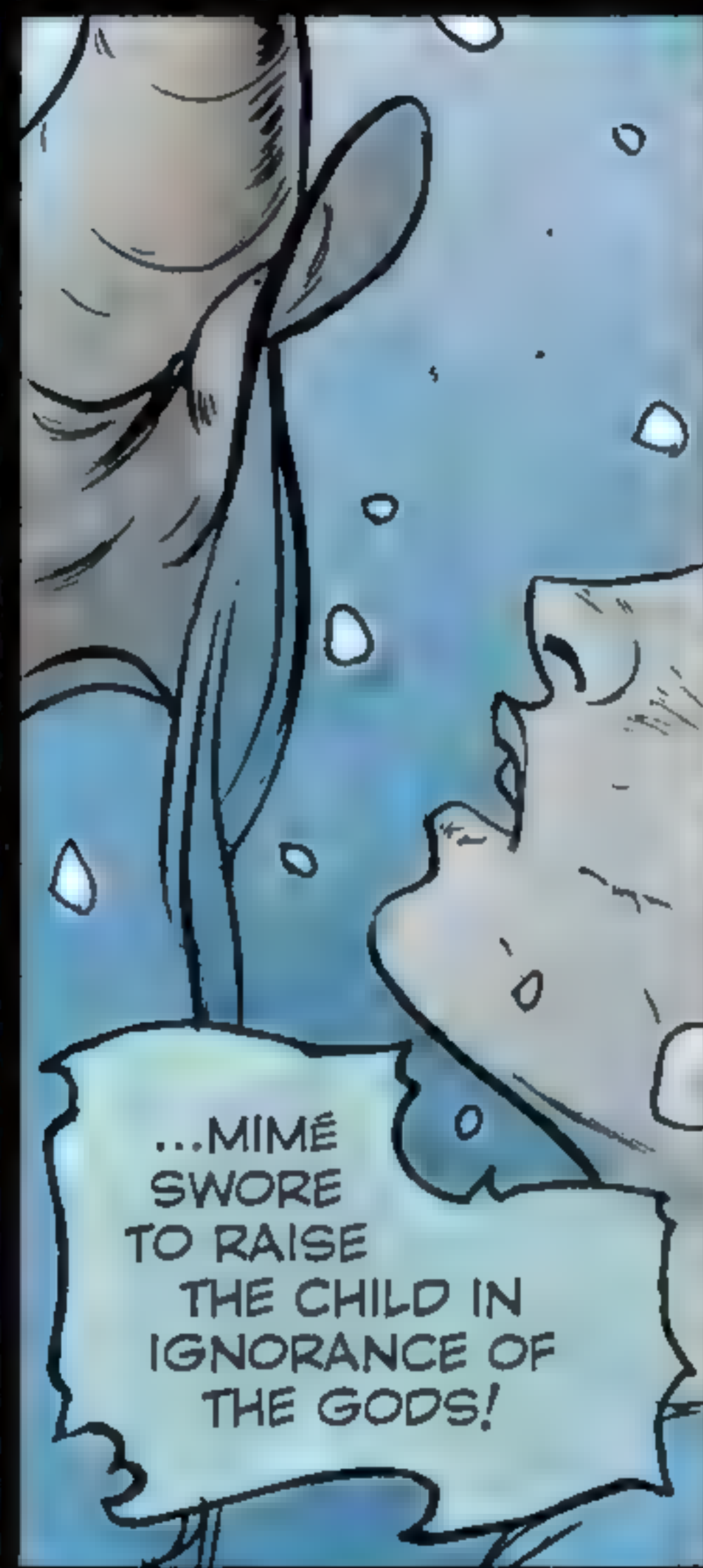


DRAGON SLAYER.

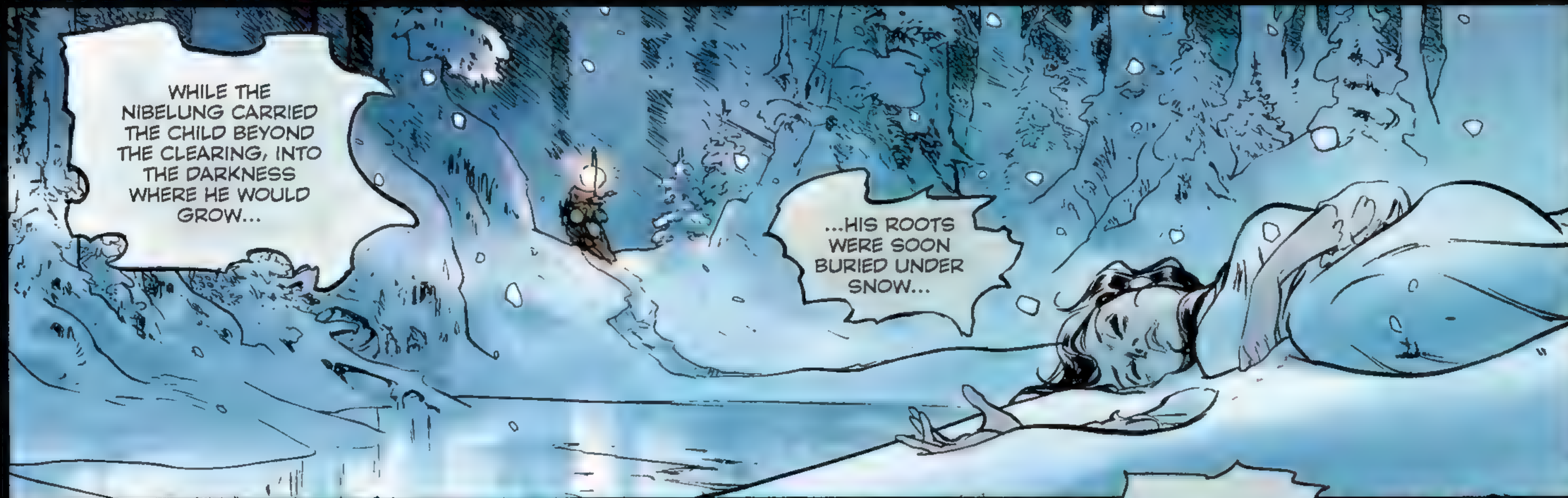


WITH THEIR REALMS SO NEAR, THE NIBELUNGS FEAR THE DEAD. THEY RESPECT THEIR FINAL WISHES.

SO...

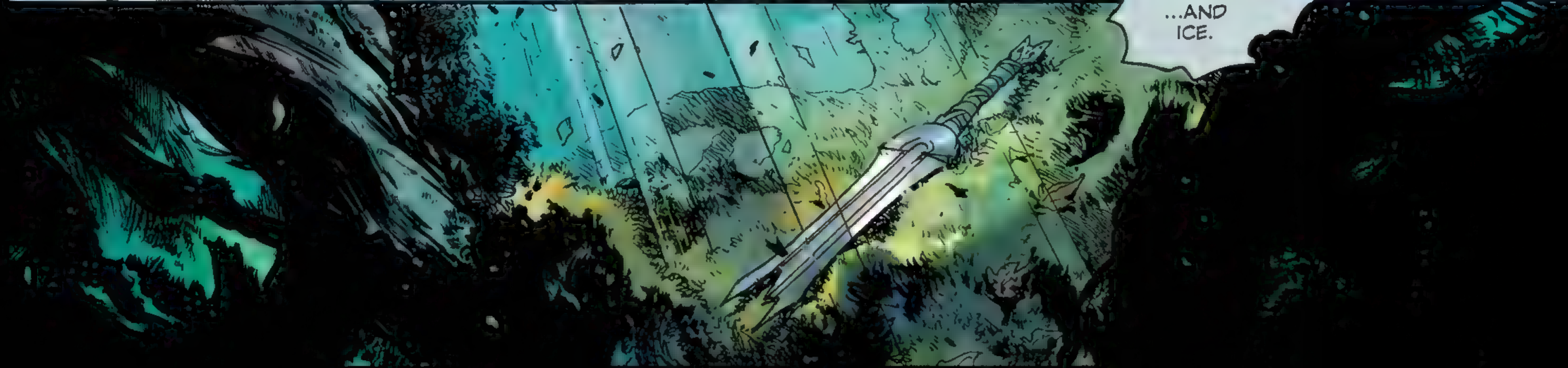


...MIME SWORE TO RAISE THE CHILD IN IGNORANCE OF THE GODS!



WHILE THE NIBELUNG CARRIED THE CHILD BEYOND THE CLEARING, INTO THE DARKNESS WHERE HE WOULD GROW...

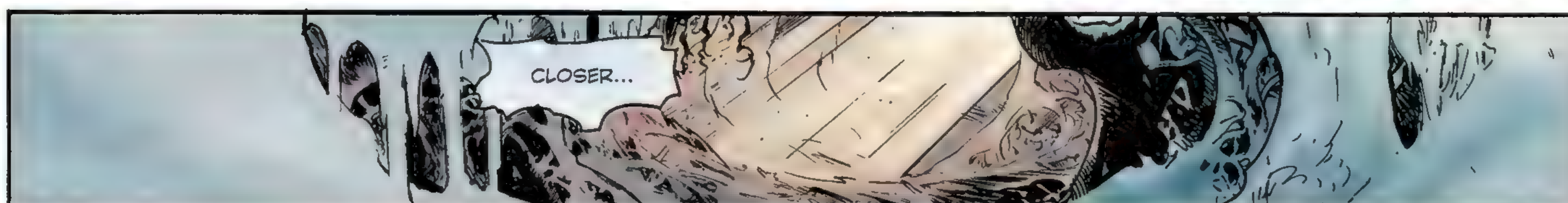
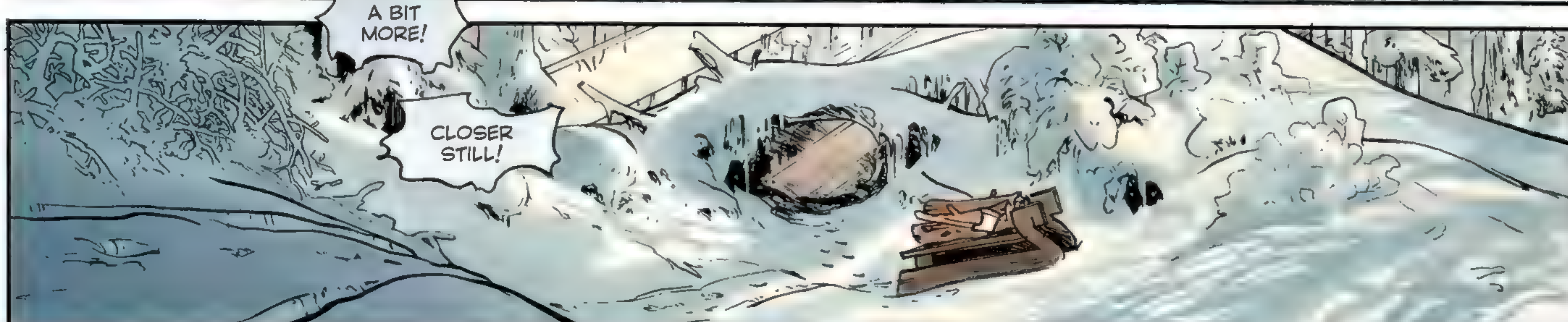
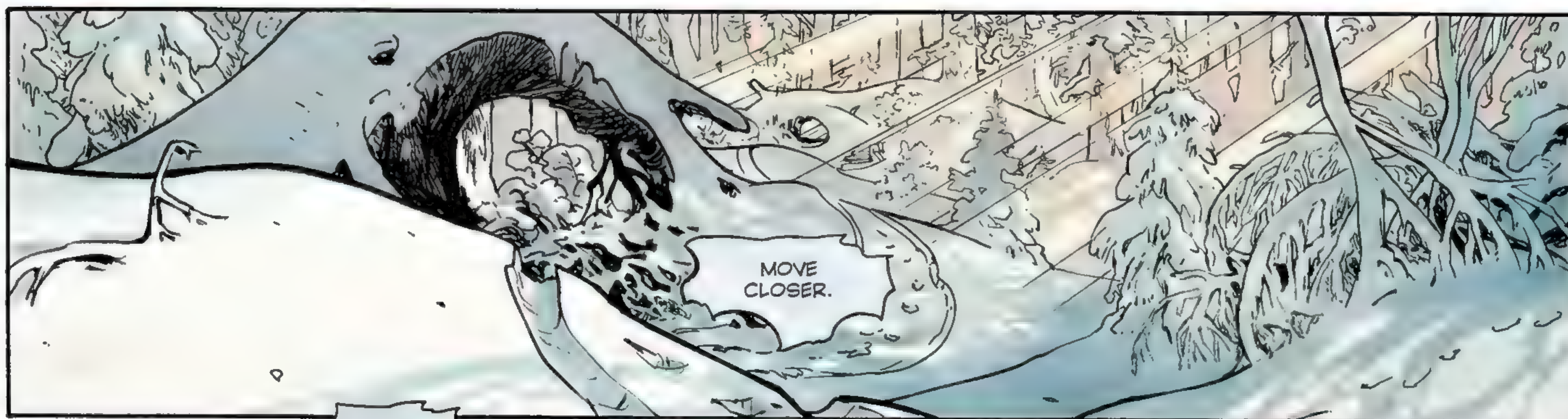
...HIS ROOTS WERE SOON BURIED UNDER SNOW...



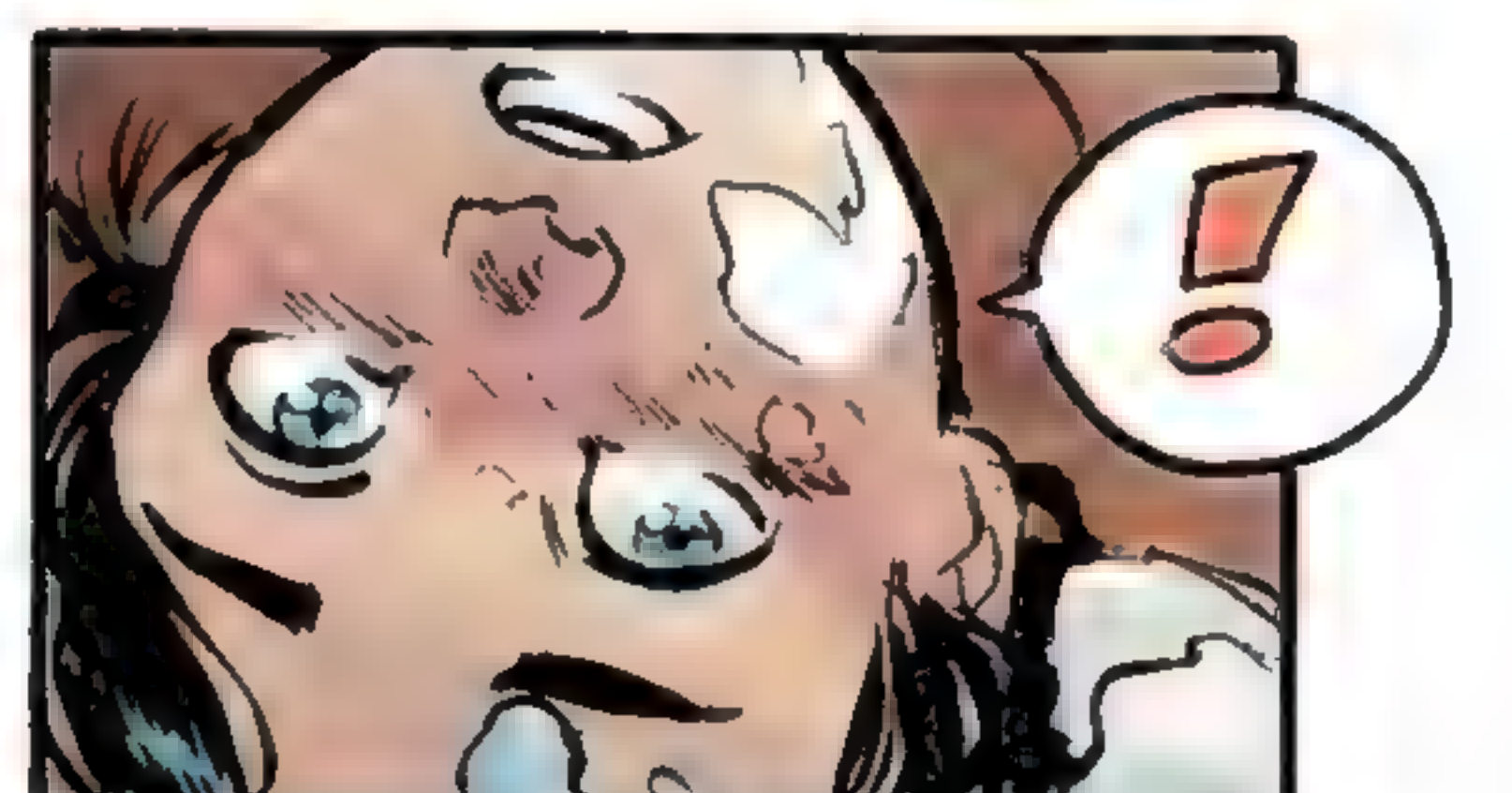
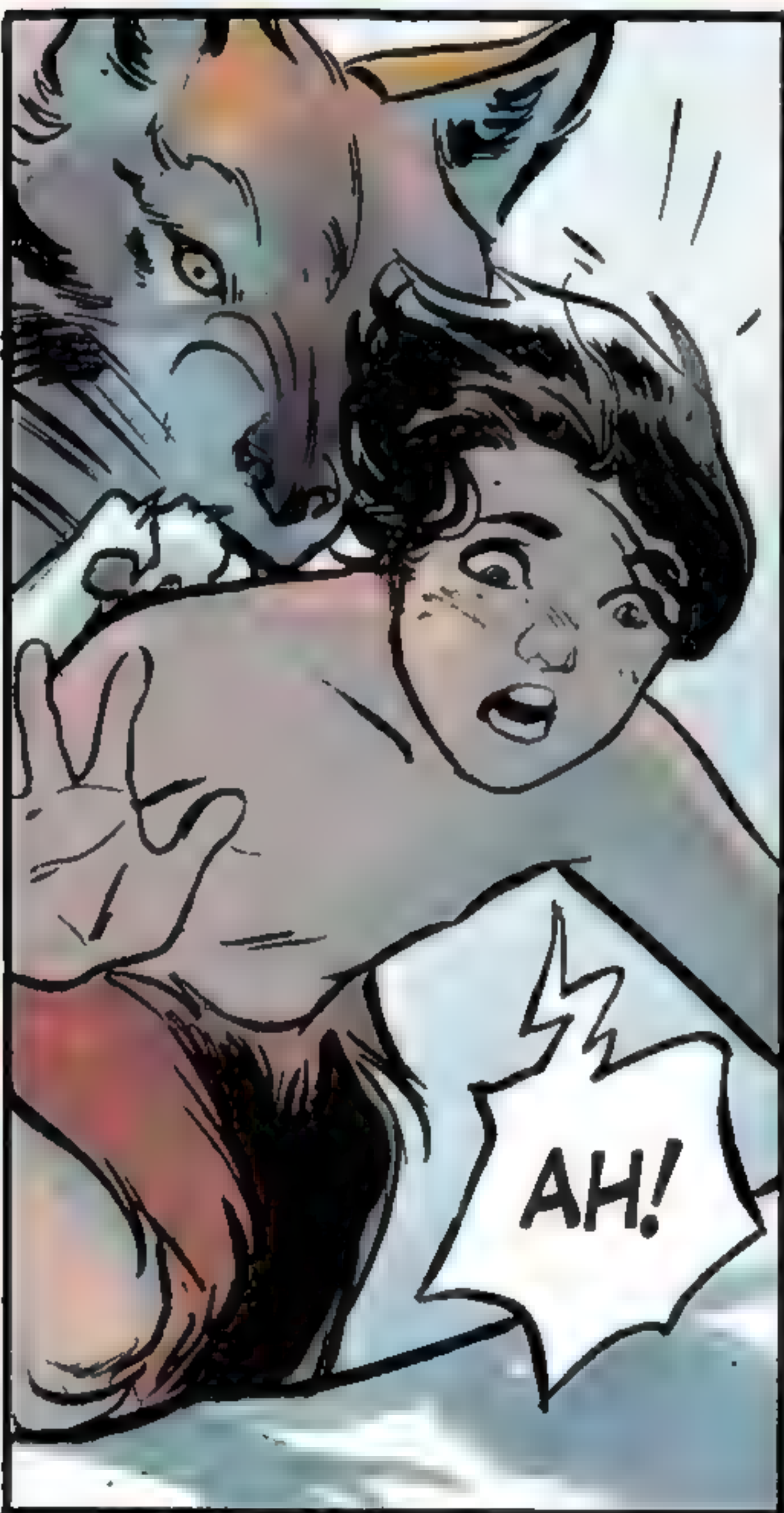
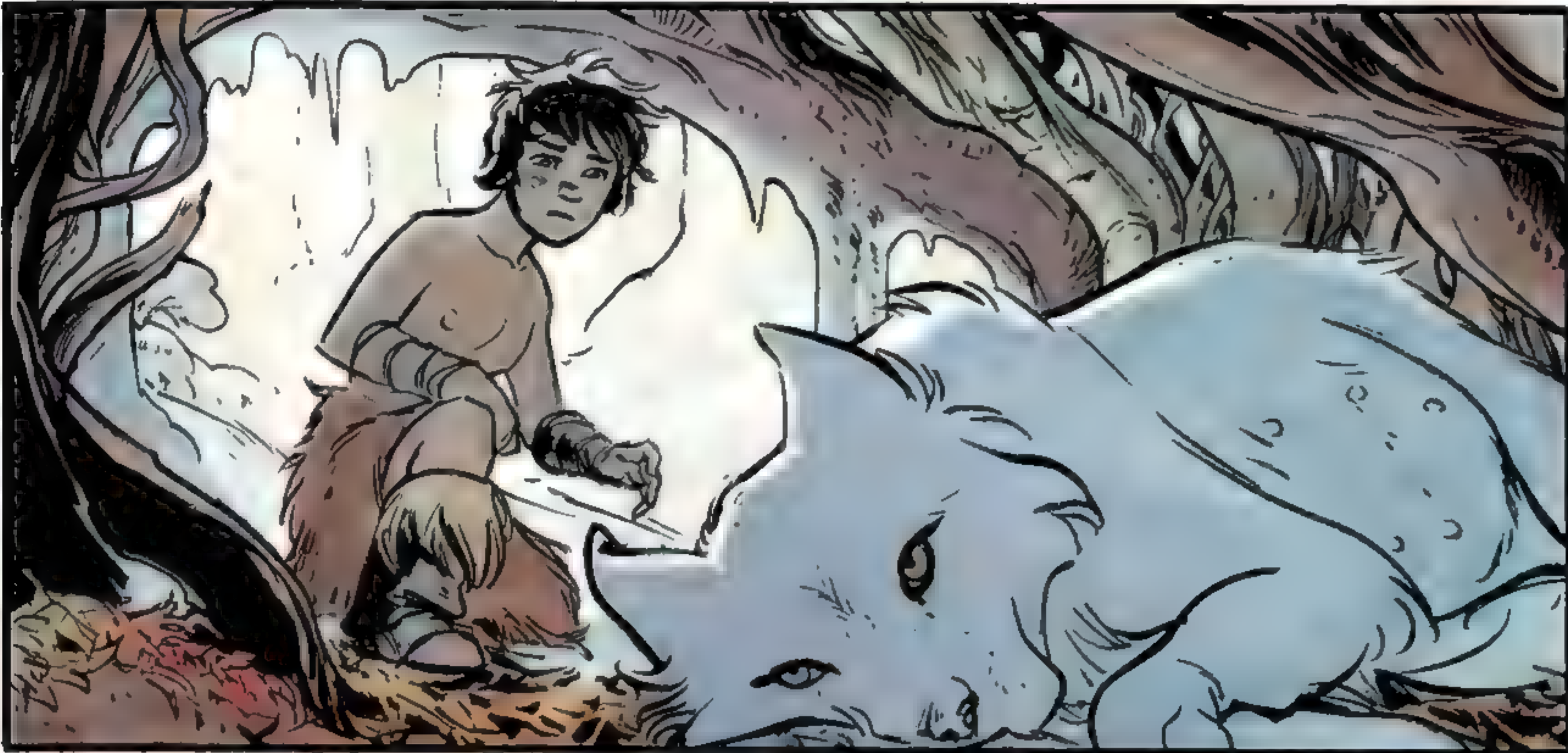
...AND ICE.

SHOW HIM TO ME.

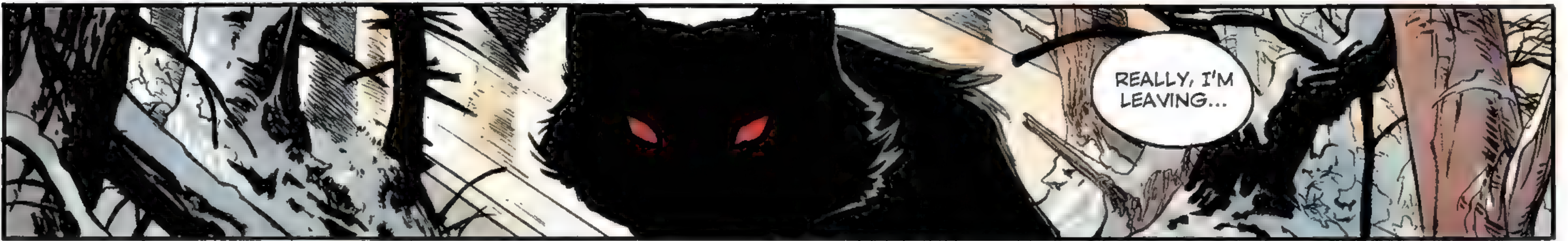










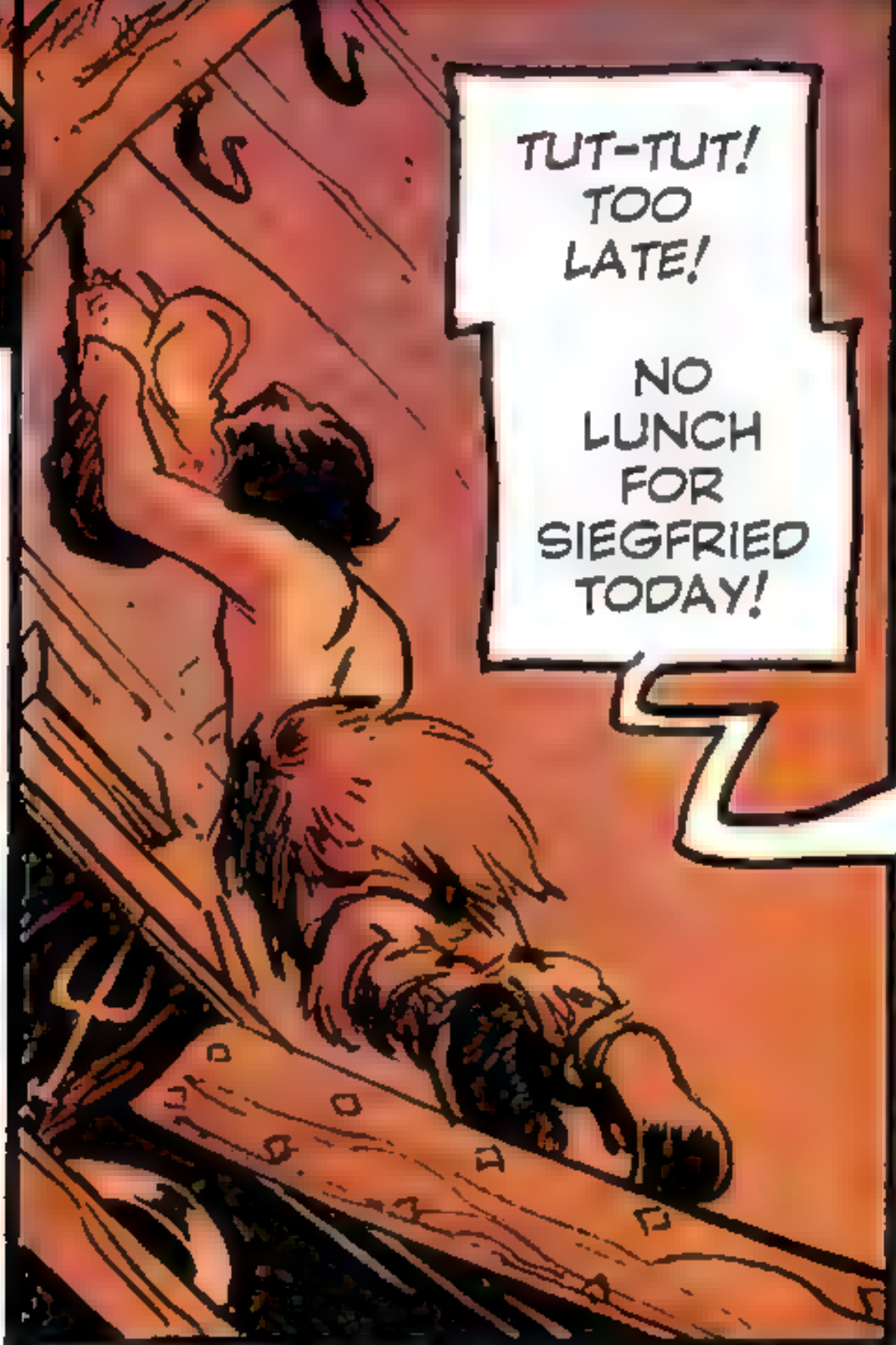






TOSS  
THAT INTO  
THE FIRE.

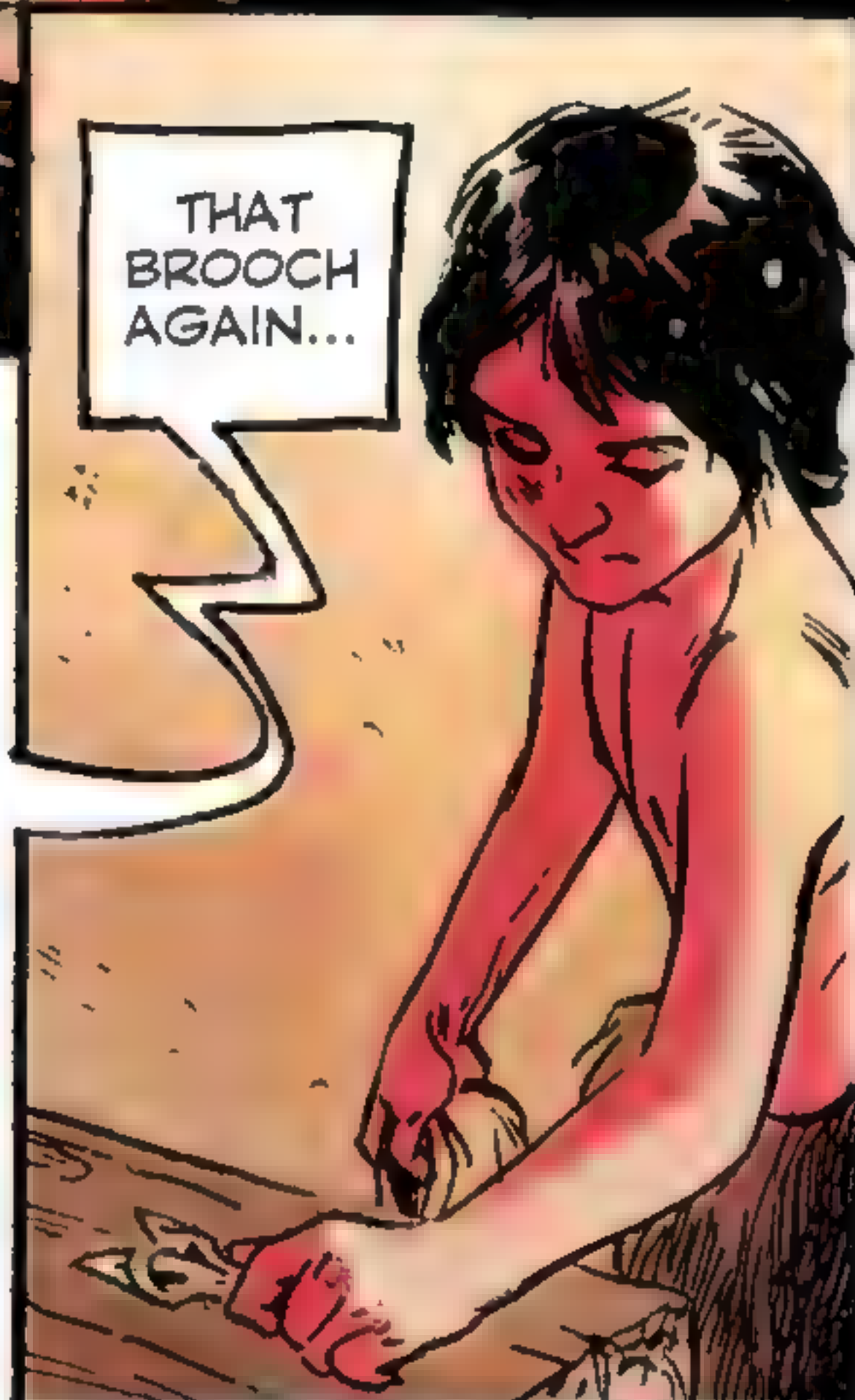
KEEP  
FEEDING IT!



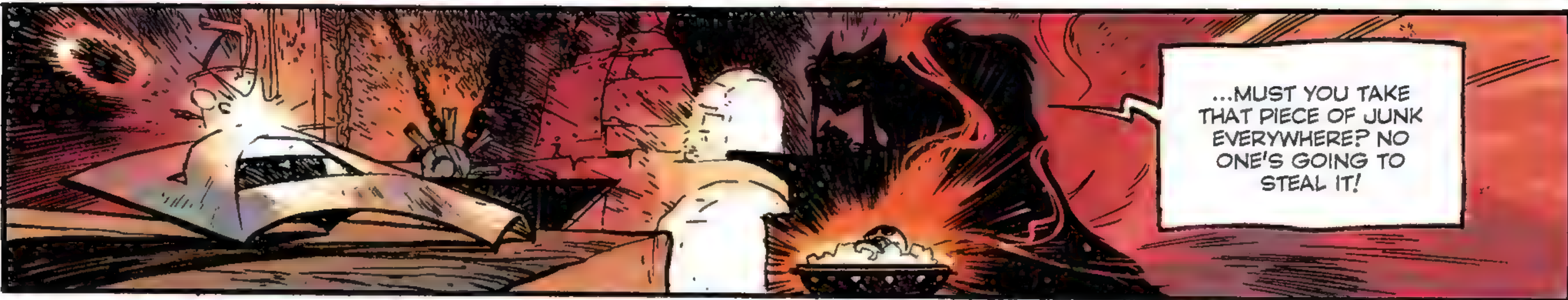
TUT-TUT!  
TOO  
LATE!  
  
NO  
LUNCH  
FOR  
SIEGFRIED  
TODAY!



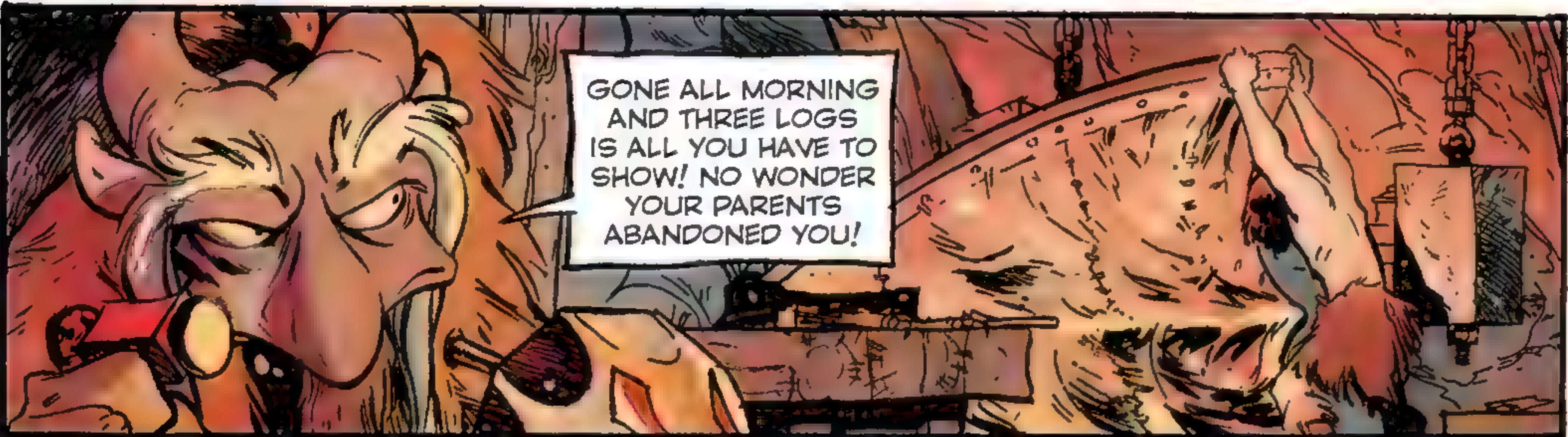
TO THE  
BELLOWS!



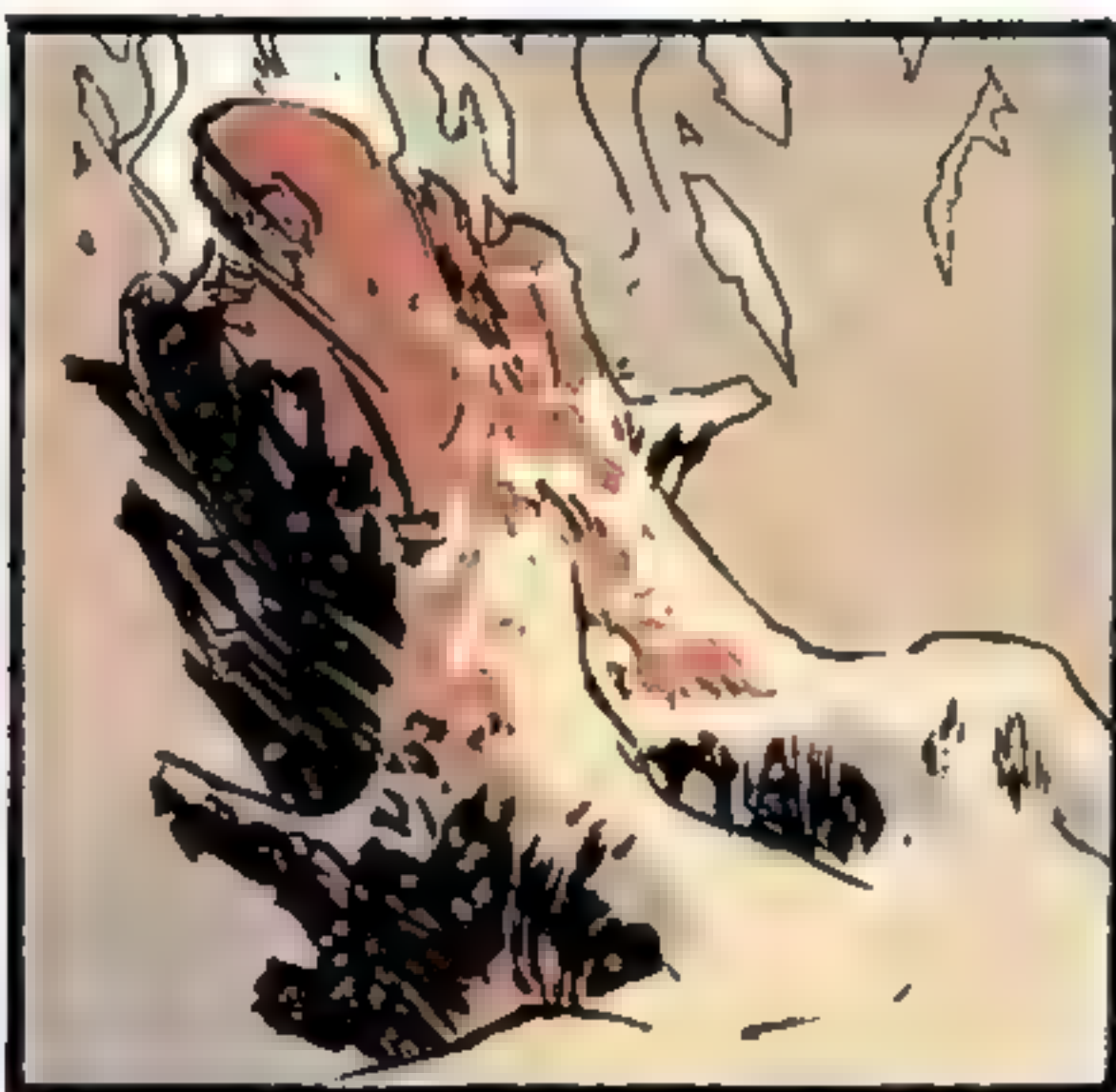
THAT  
BROOCH  
AGAIN...



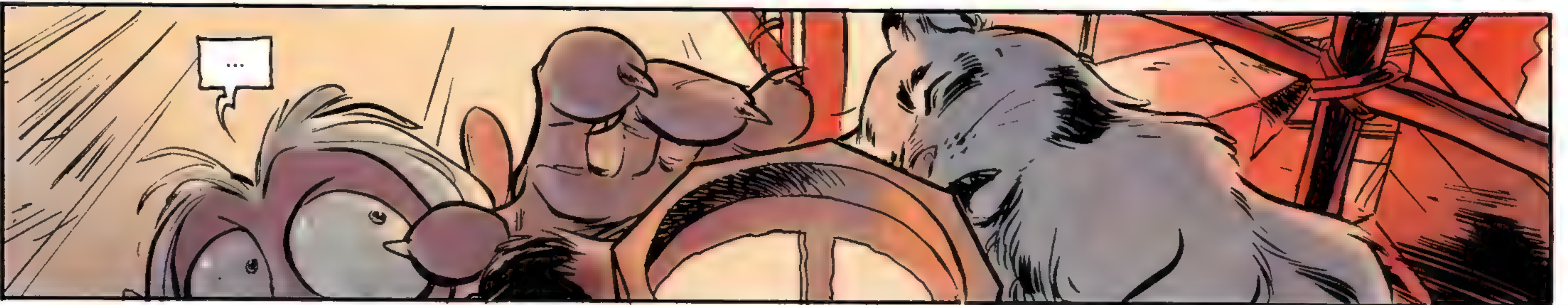
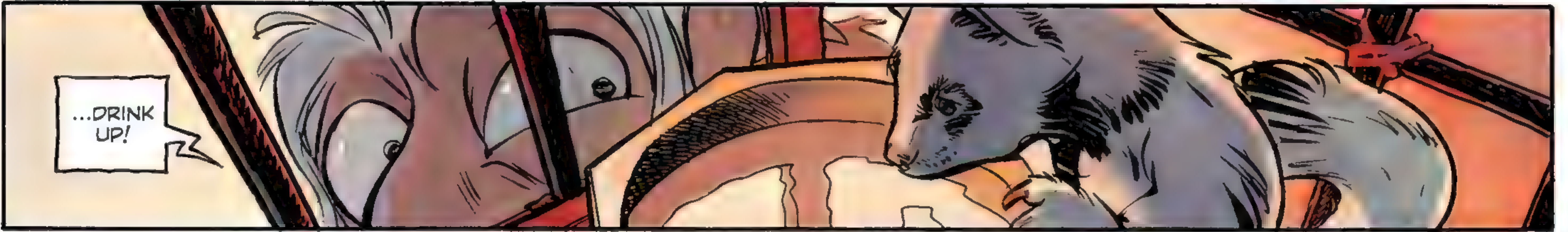
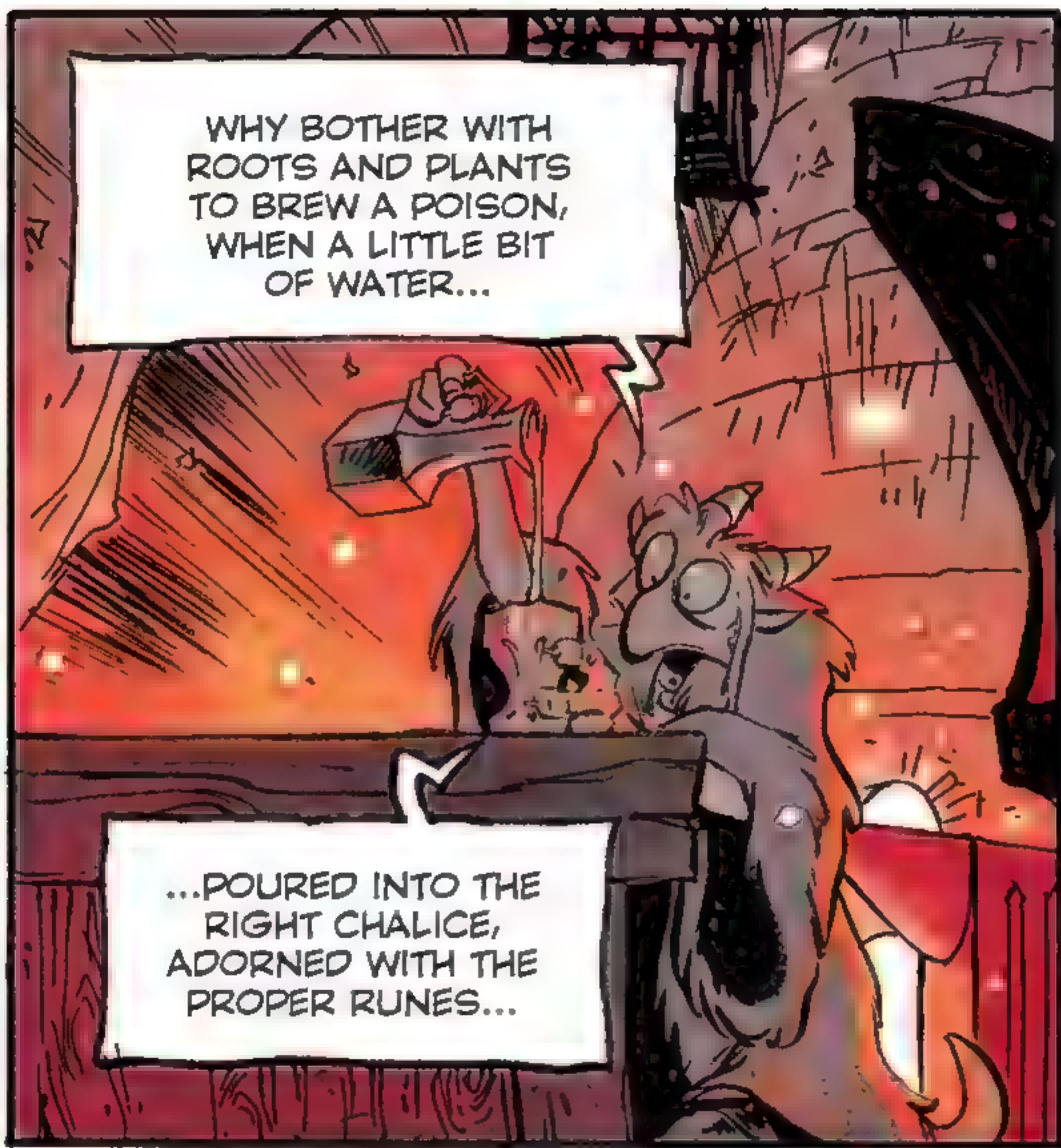
...MUST YOU TAKE  
THAT PIECE OF JUNK  
EVERYWHERE? NO  
ONE'S GOING TO  
STEAL IT!



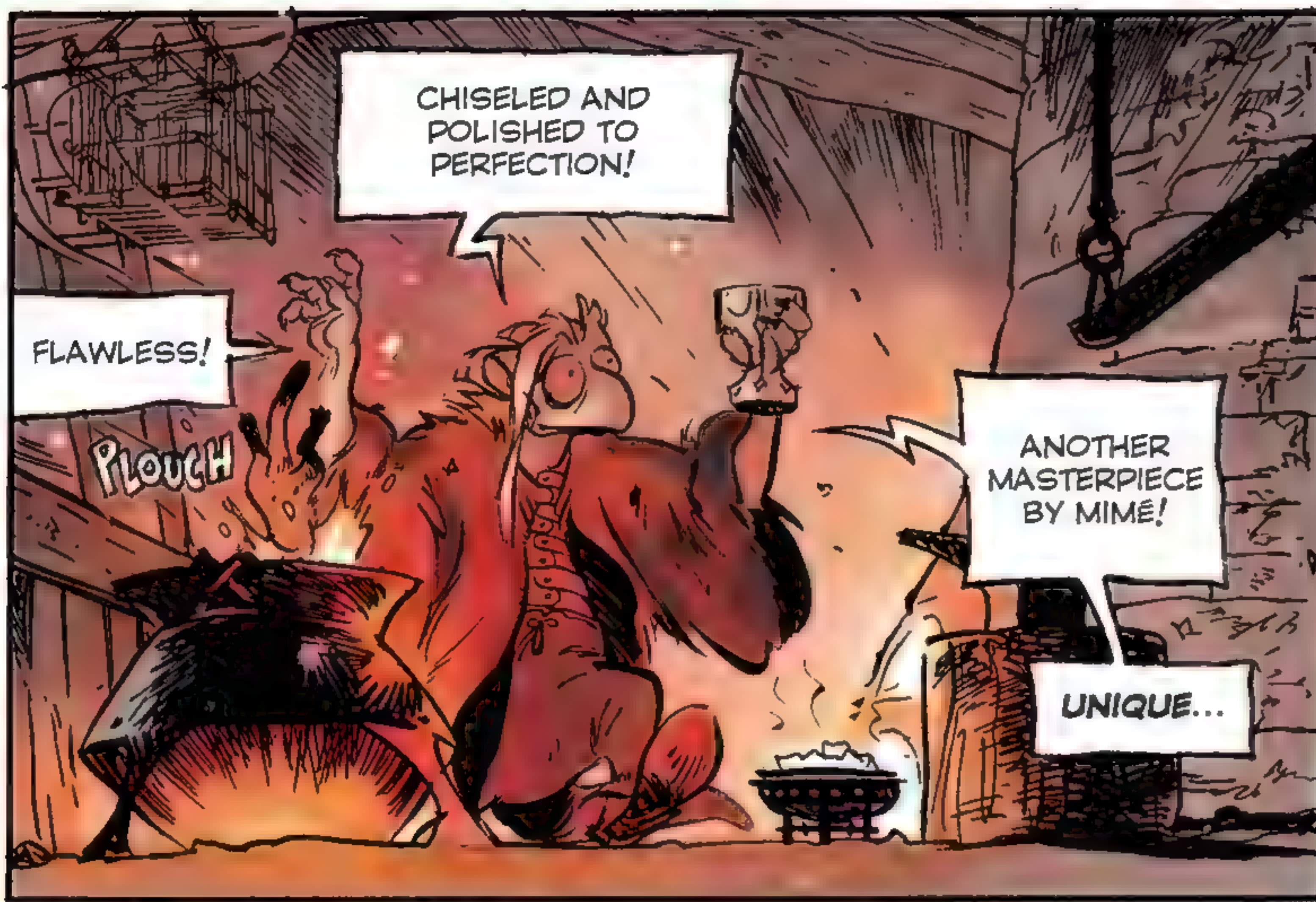
GONE ALL MORNING  
AND THREE LOGS  
IS ALL YOU HAVE TO  
SHOW! NO WONDER  
YOUR PARENTS  
ABANDONED YOU!











CHISELED AND  
POLISHED TO  
PERFECTION!

FLAWLESS!

PLOUGH

ANOTHER  
MASTERPIECE  
BY MIMÉ!

UNIQUE...

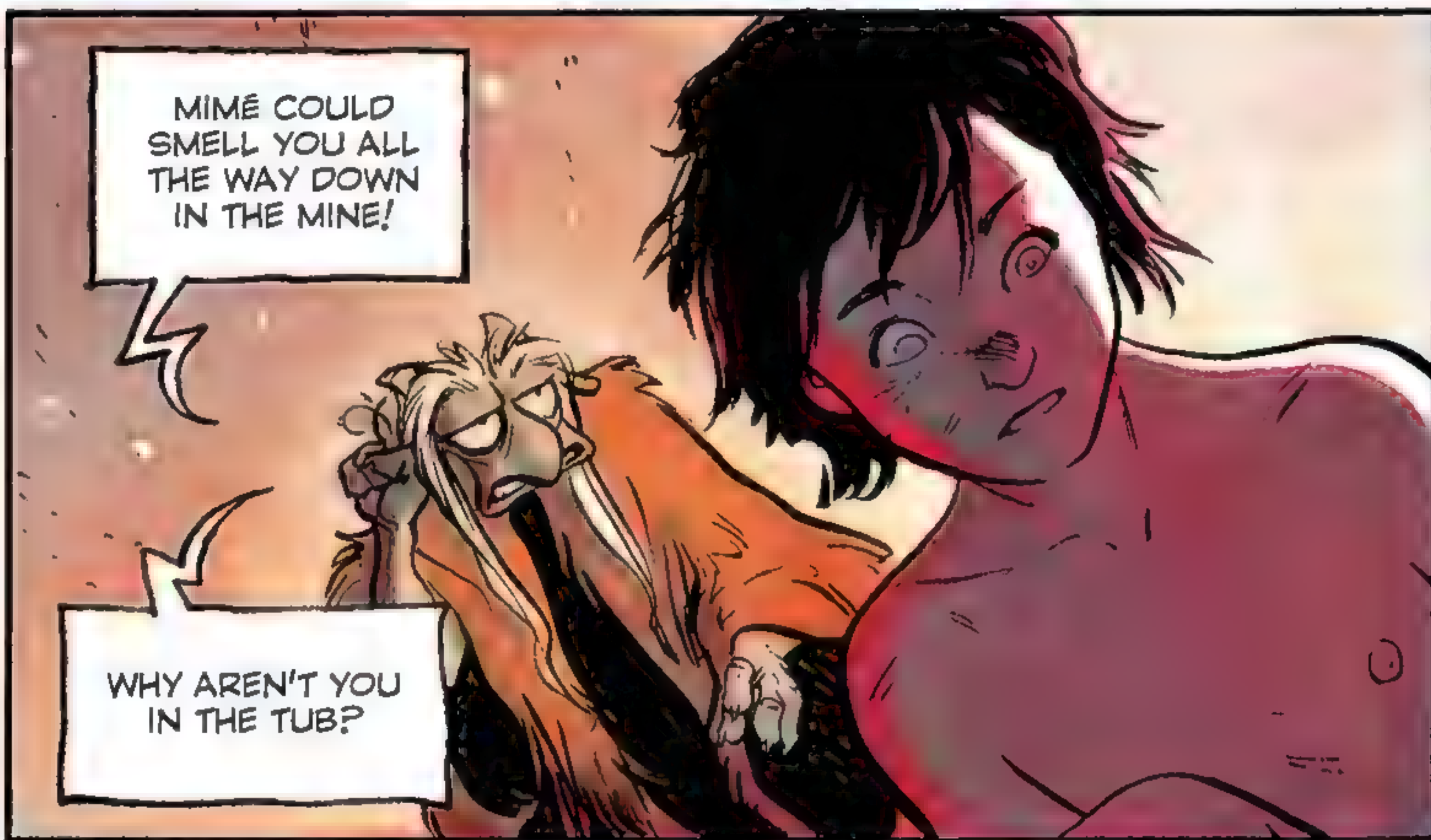


...LIKE  
ALL THE  
OTHERS.



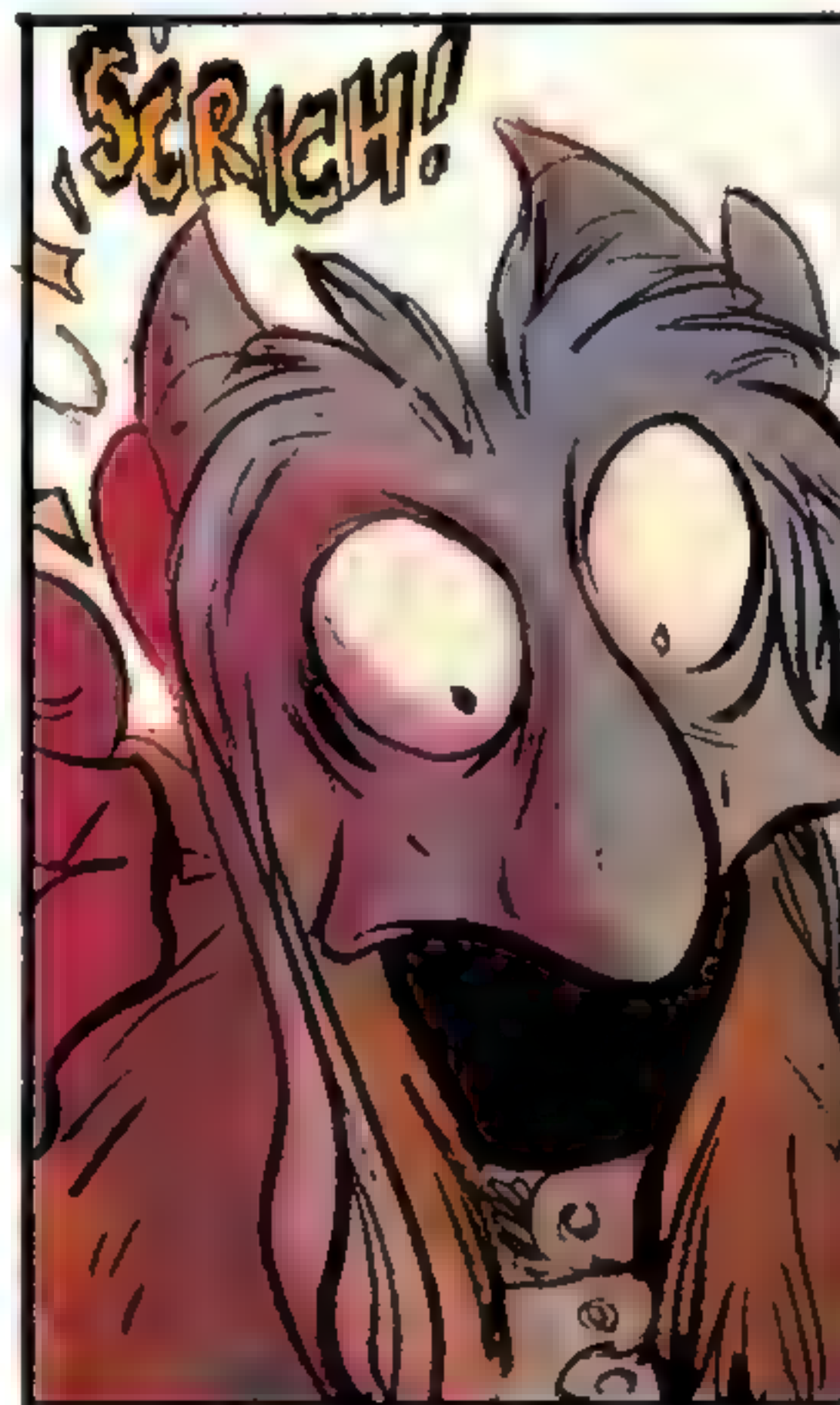
THERE!

NOW,  
WHAT  
IS THE  
MAN-CUB  
UP TO?

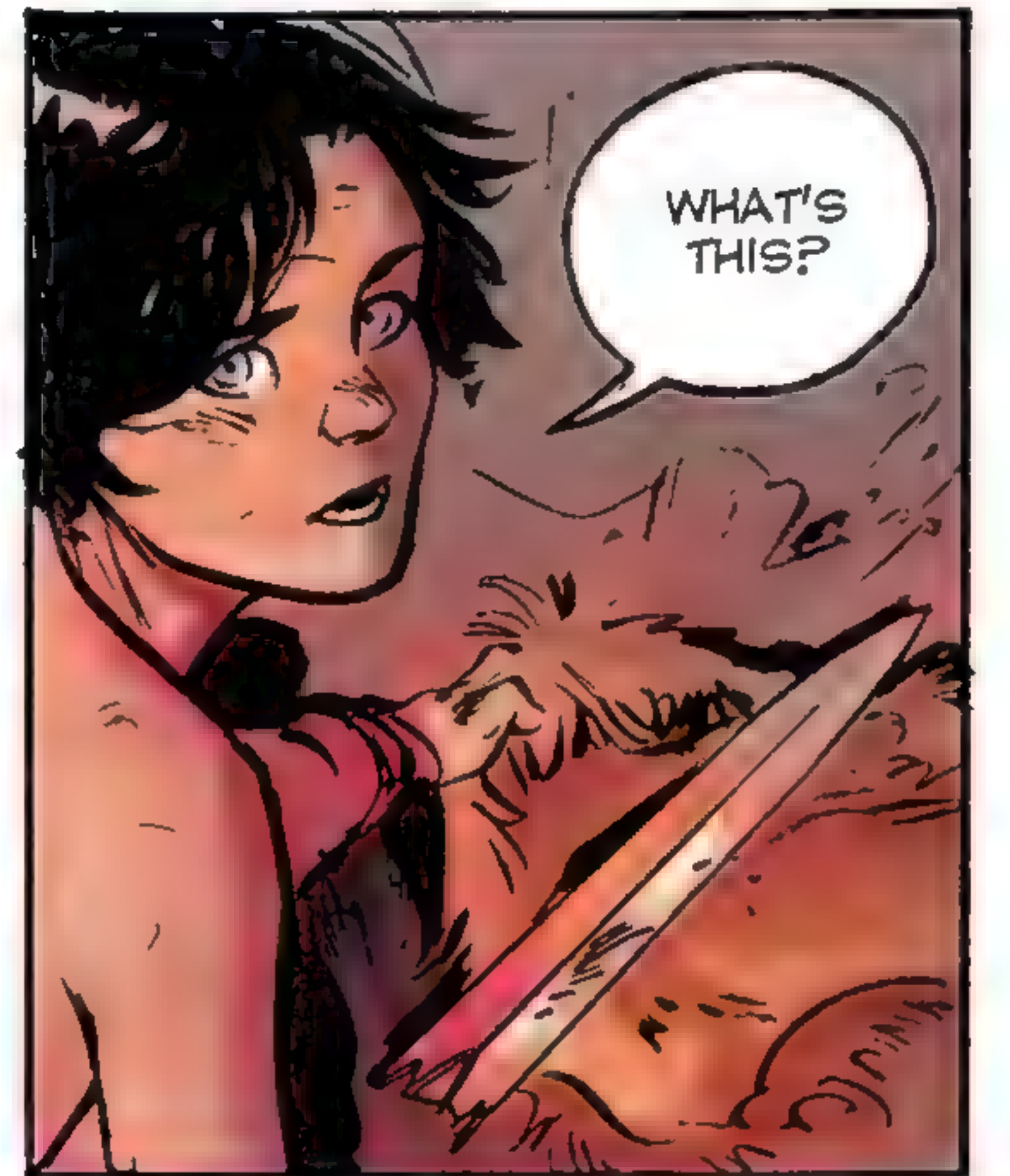


MIMÉ COULD  
SMELL YOU ALL  
THE WAY DOWN  
IN THE MINE!

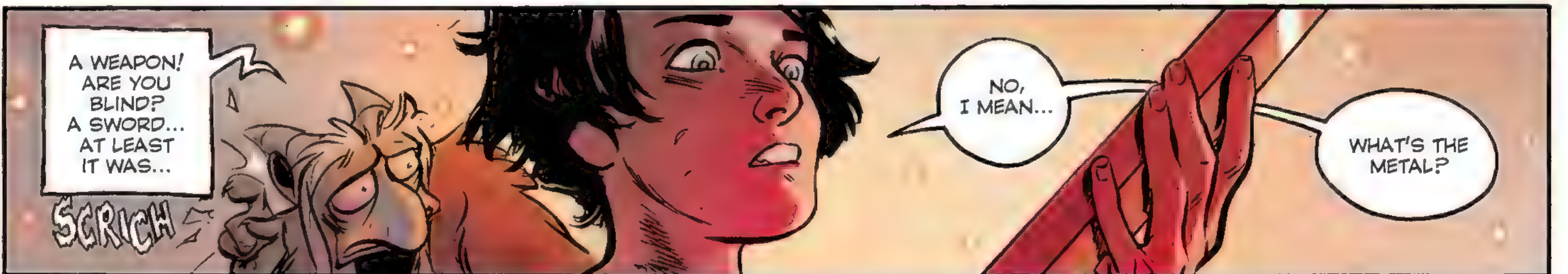
WHY AREN'T YOU  
IN THE TUB?



SCRICH!



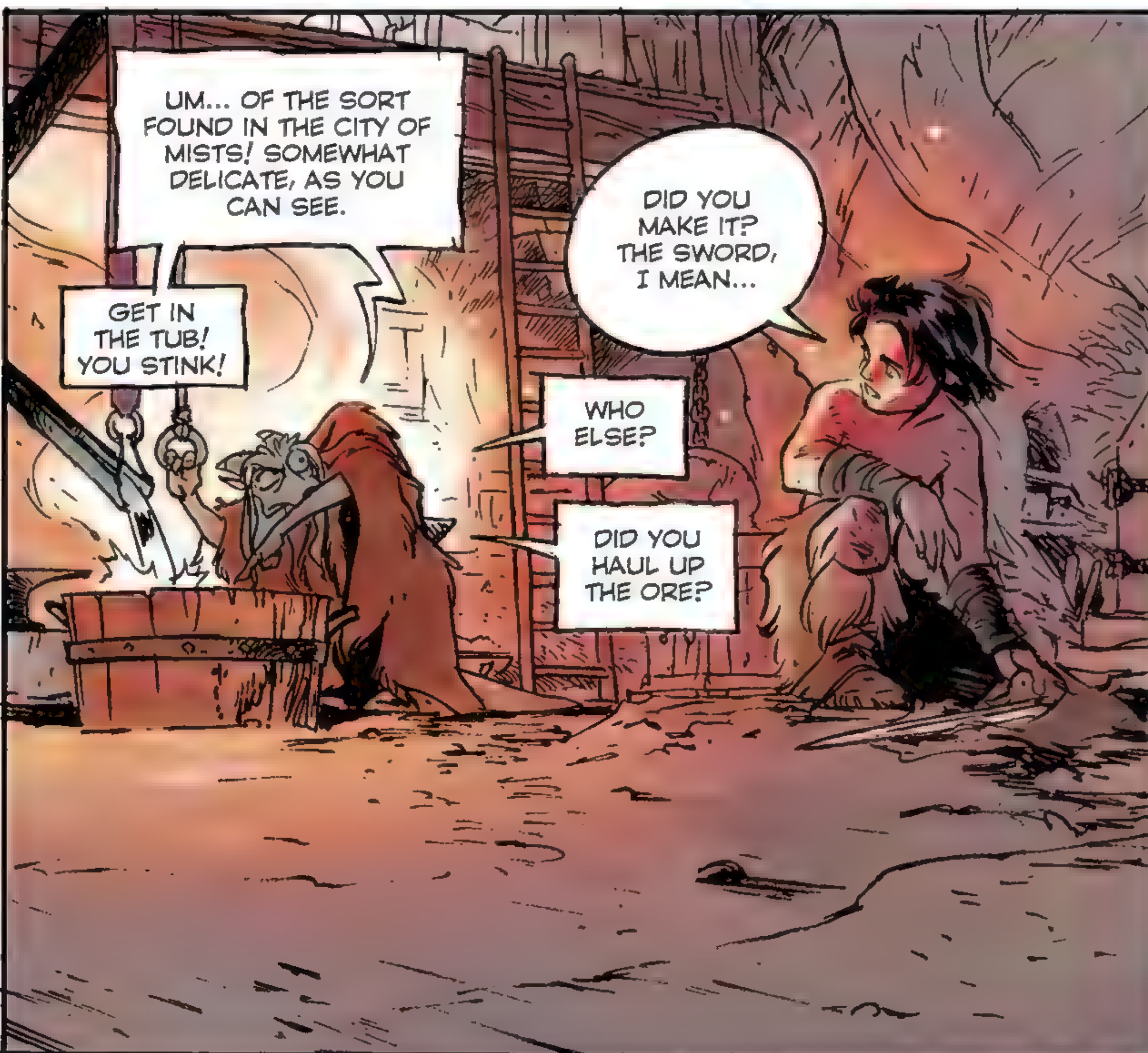
WHAT'S  
THIS?



A WEAPON!  
ARE YOU  
BLIND?  
A SWORD...  
AT LEAST  
IT WAS...

NO,  
I MEAN...

WHAT'S THE  
METAL?



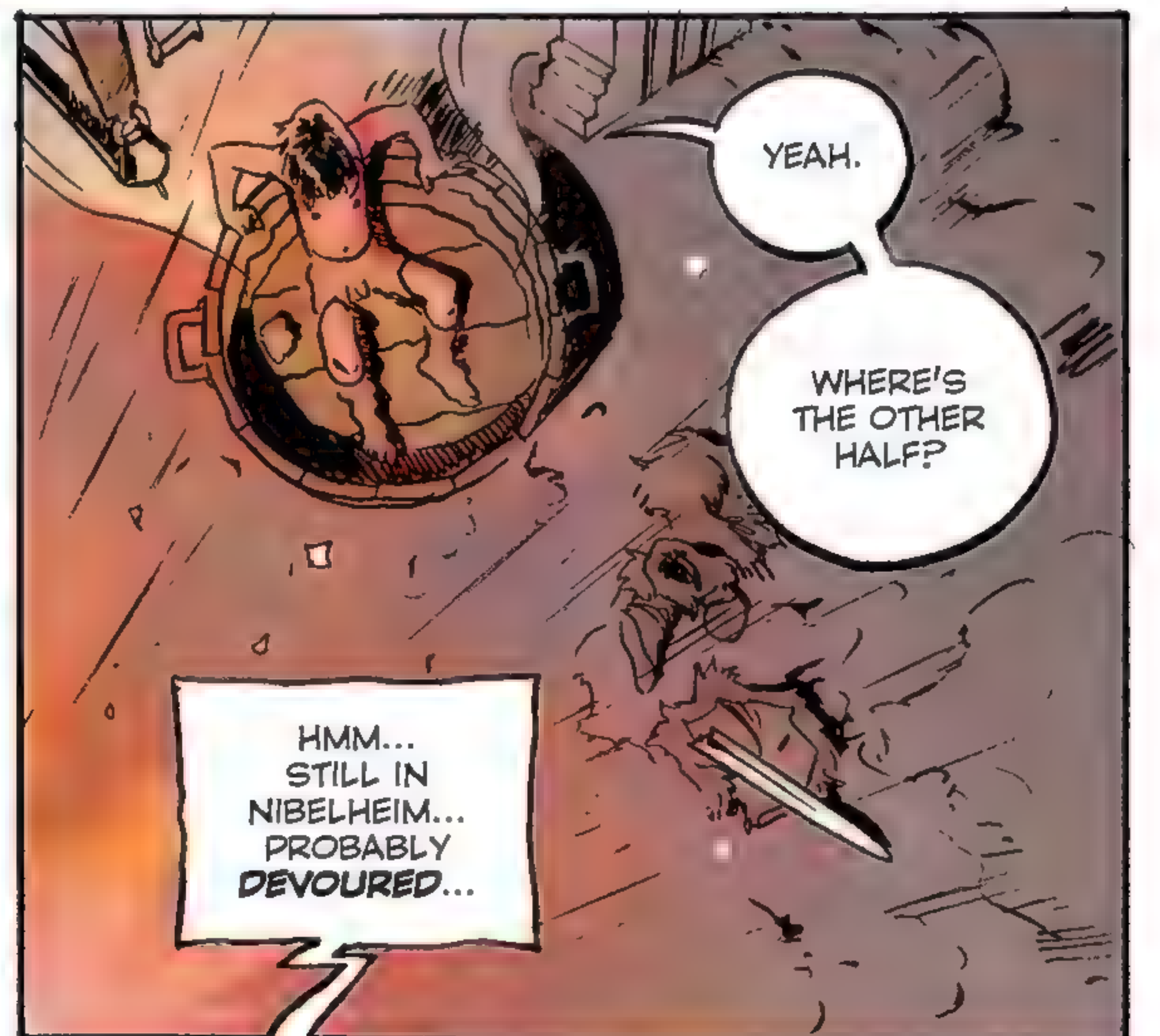
UM... OF THE SORT  
FOUND IN THE CITY OF  
MISTS! SOMEWHAT  
DELICATE, AS YOU  
CAN SEE.

GET IN  
THE TUB!  
YOU STINK!

DID YOU MAKE IT?  
THE SWORD,  
I MEAN...

WHO  
ELSE?

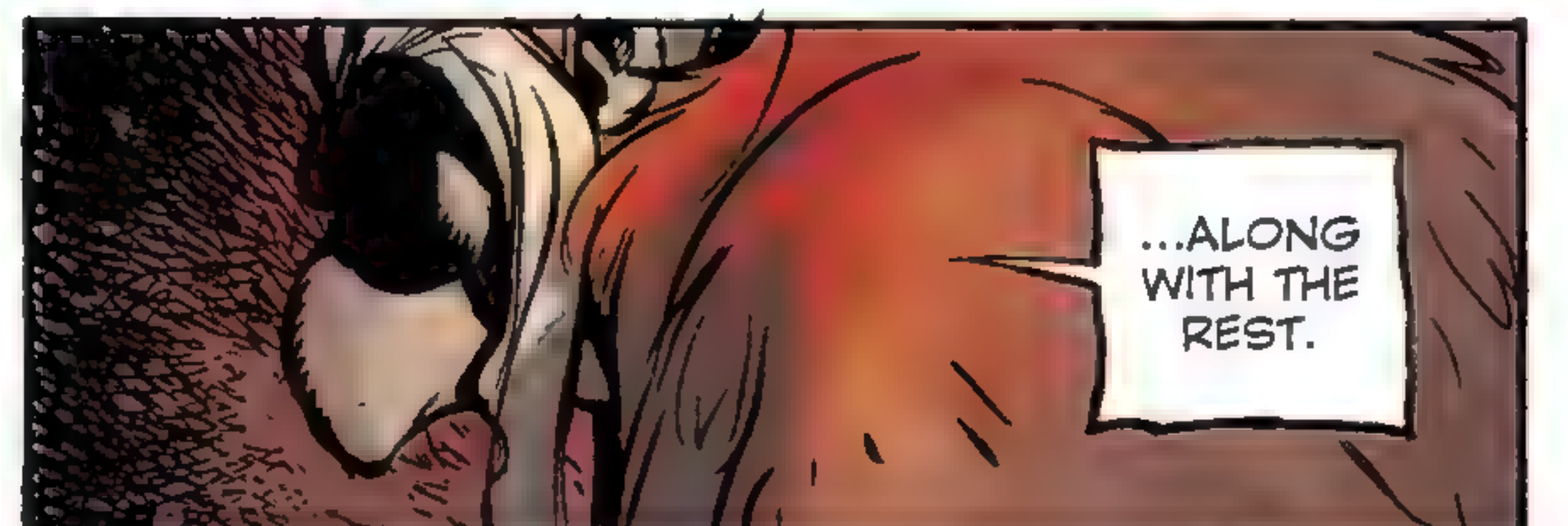
DID YOU  
HAUL UP  
THE ORE?



YEAH.

WHERE'S THE  
OTHER  
HALF?

HMM...  
STILL IN  
NIBELHEIM...  
PROBABLY  
DEVoured...



...ALONG  
WITH THE  
REST.





HOW'S  
THE ROOF  
COMING?

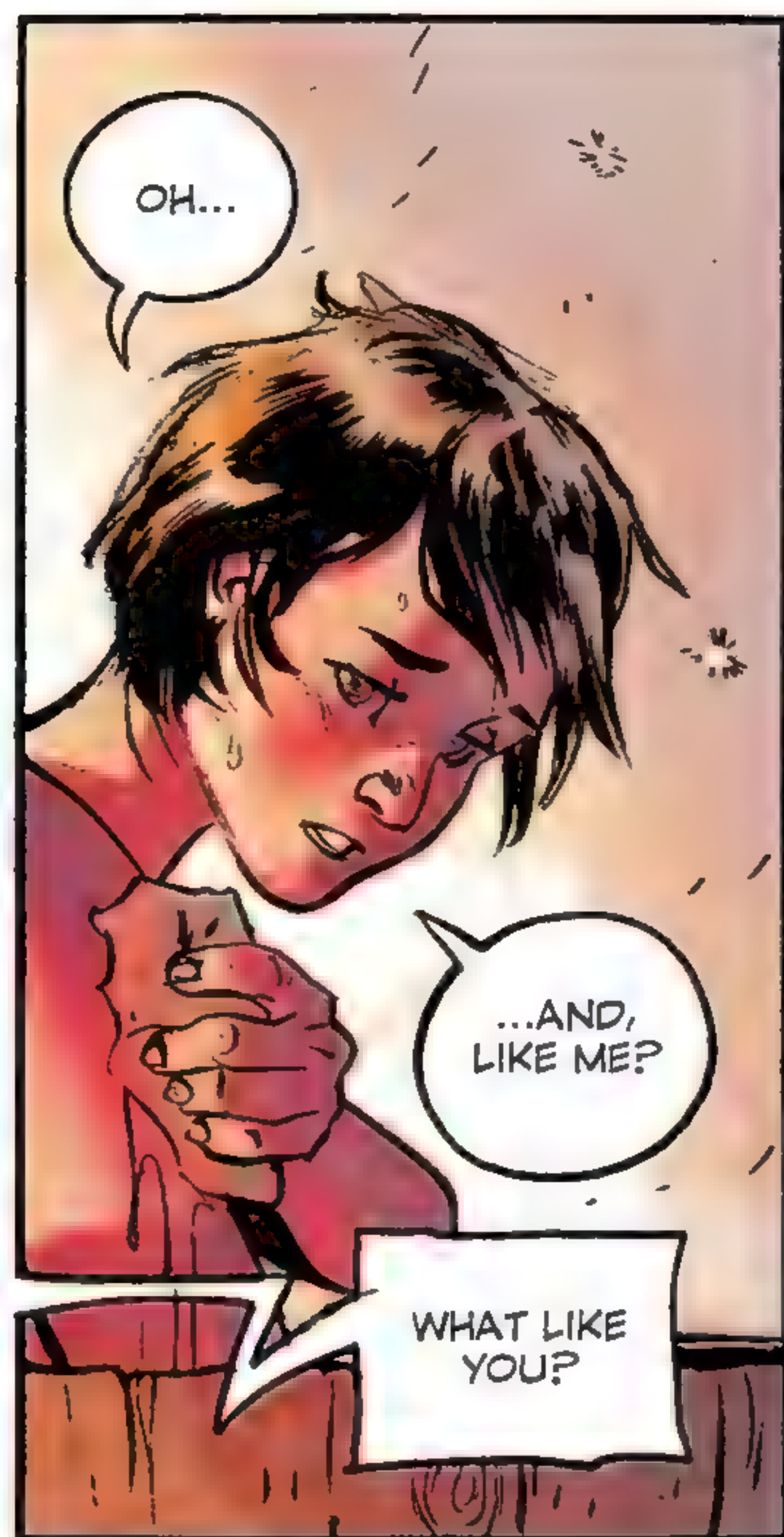
ALMOST DONE!  
HEY, MIMÉ, ARE  
THERE TREES  
IN THE CITY OF  
MISTS?

NO.

WHAT  
ABOUT  
WOLVES?



NO TREES,  
NO DREADED  
BEASTS, AND,  
ABOVE ALL,  
**NO SUN!**



OH...

...AND,  
LIKE ME?

WHAT LIKE  
YOU?



YOU  
KNOW...



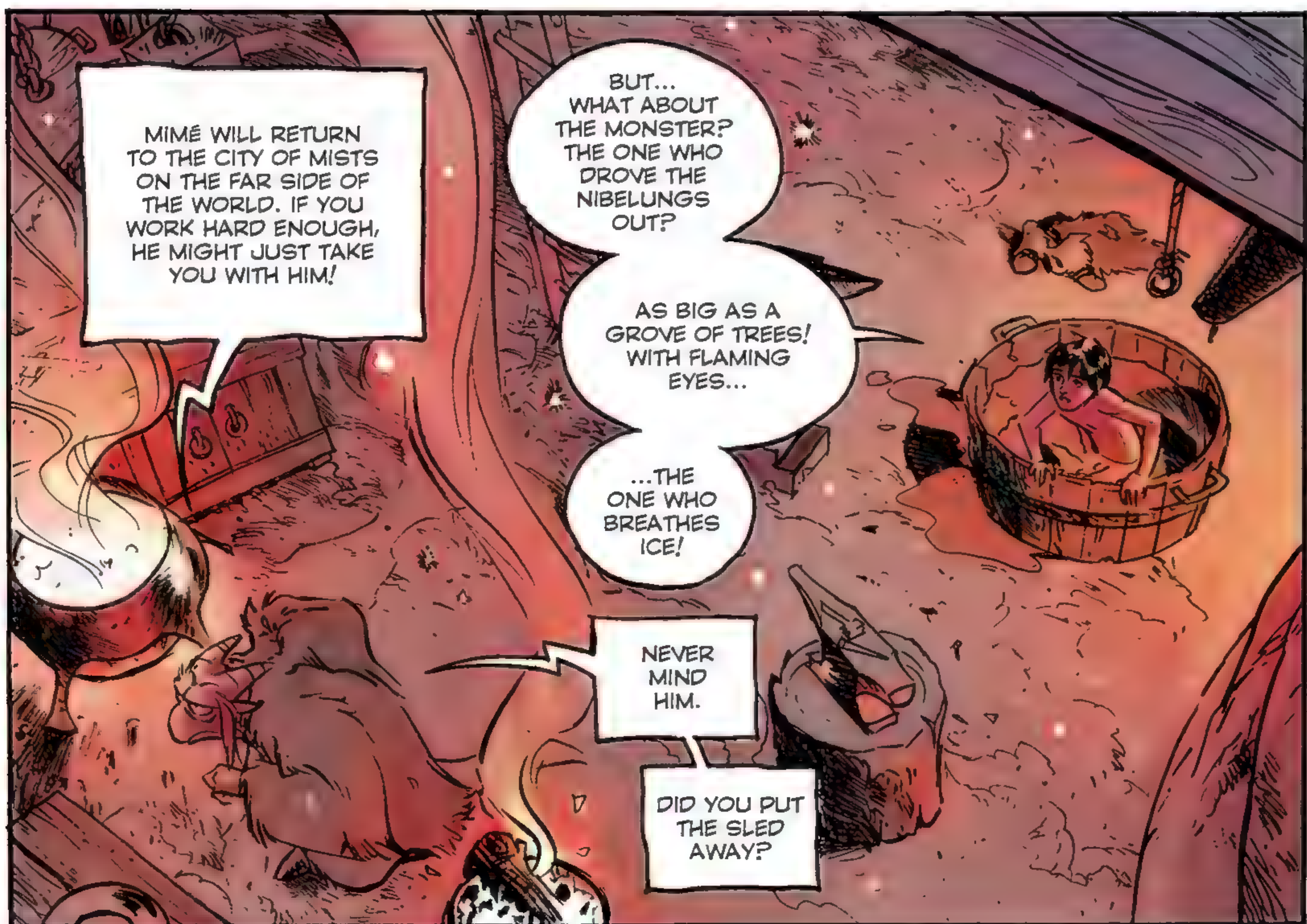
NO, NO ONE LIKE  
YOU. YOU KNOW THAT.  
MIMÉ HAS NEVER SEEN  
THE LIKES OF YOU.  
NO NIBELUNG HAS!



WHO KNOWS WHERE  
YOU CAME FROM?  
YOUR PARENTS  
TRAVELED A GREAT  
DISTANCE JUST TO  
ABANDON YOU!



AND ONE  
DAY...



MIMÉ WILL RETURN  
TO THE CITY OF MISTS  
ON THE FAR SIDE OF  
THE WORLD. IF YOU  
WORK HARD ENOUGH,  
HE MIGHT JUST TAKE  
YOU WITH HIM!

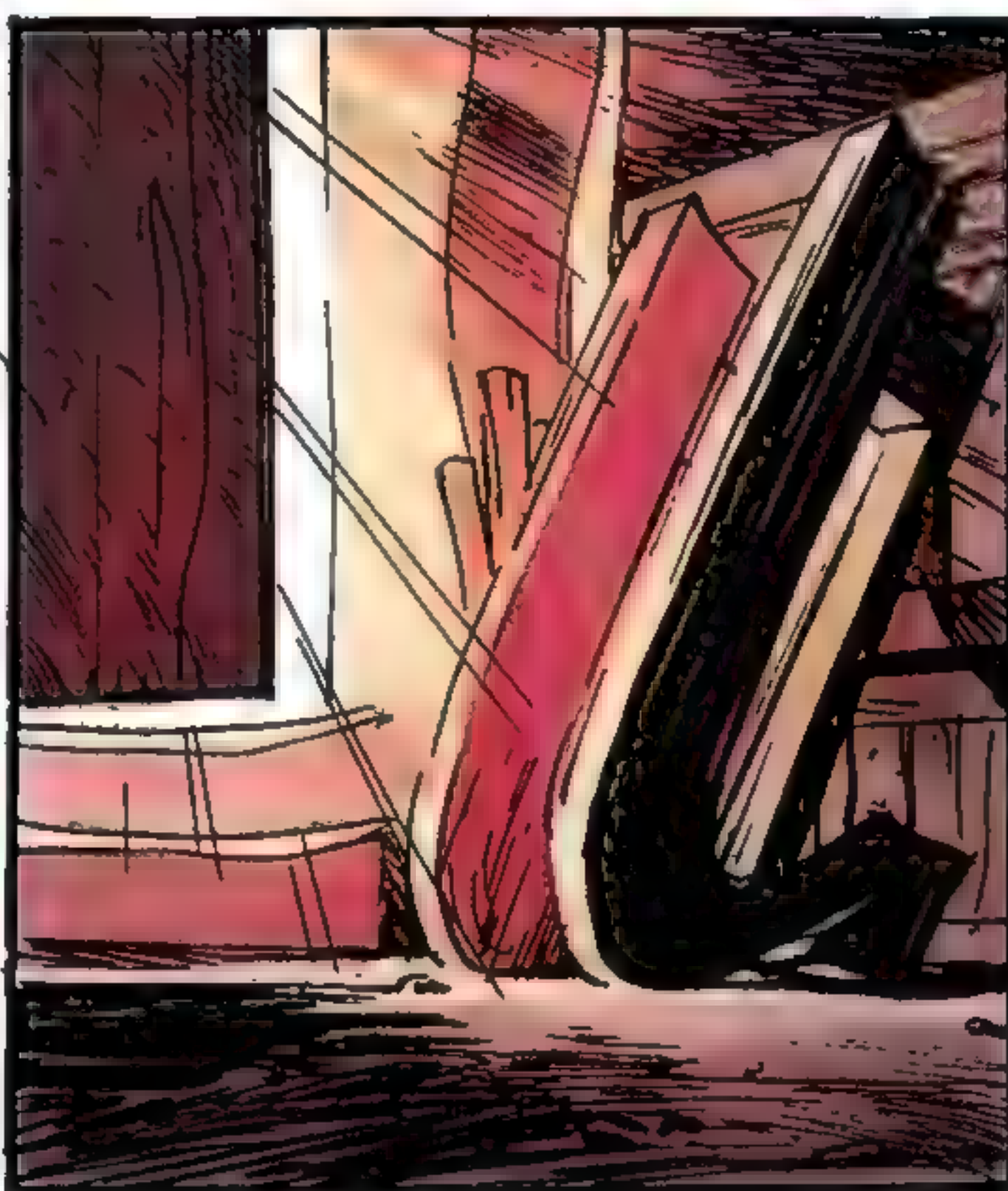
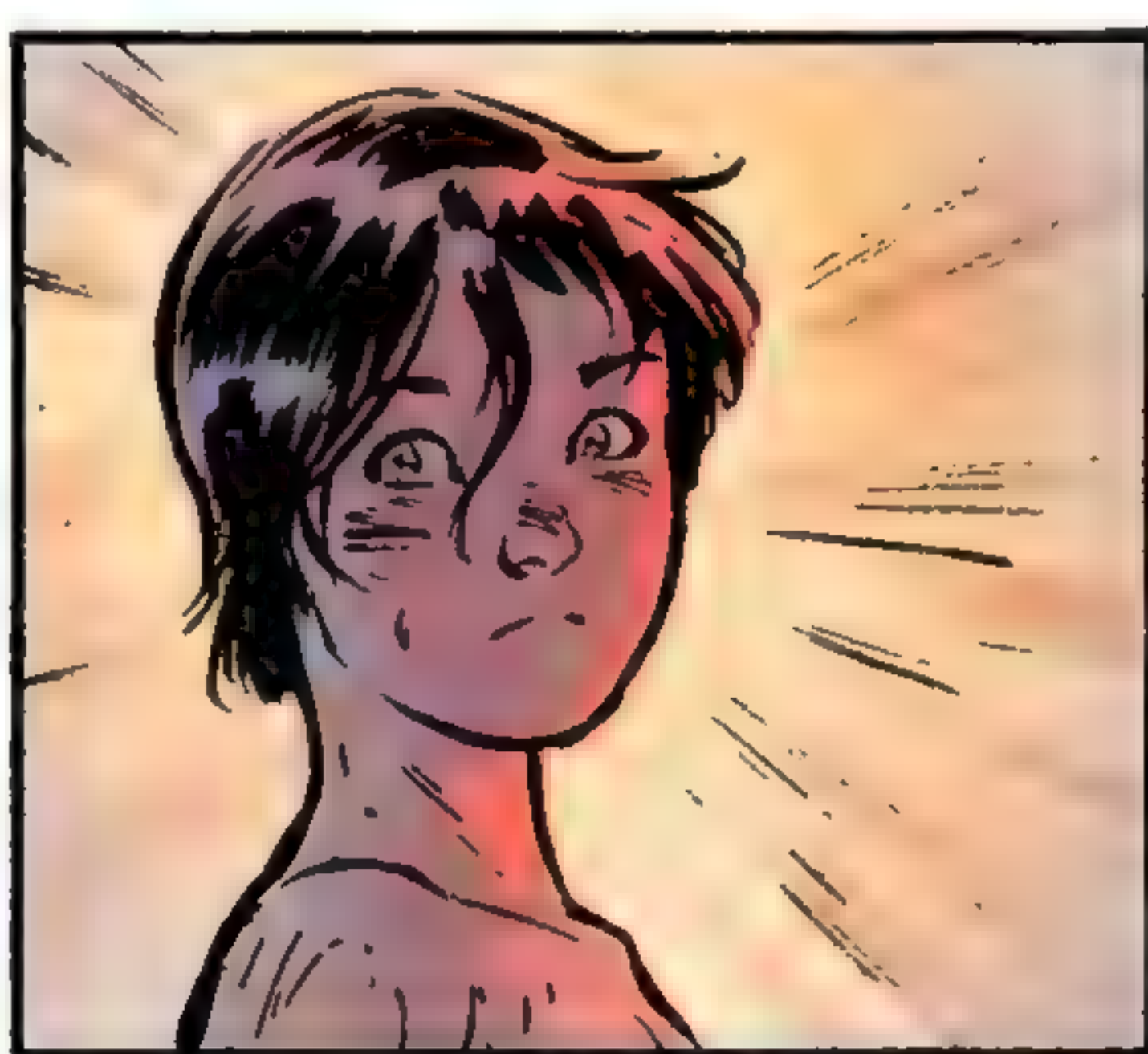
BUT...  
WHAT ABOUT  
THE MONSTER?  
THE ONE WHO  
DROVE THE  
NIBELUNGS  
OUT?

AS BIG AS A  
GROVE OF TREES!  
WITH FLAMING  
EYES...

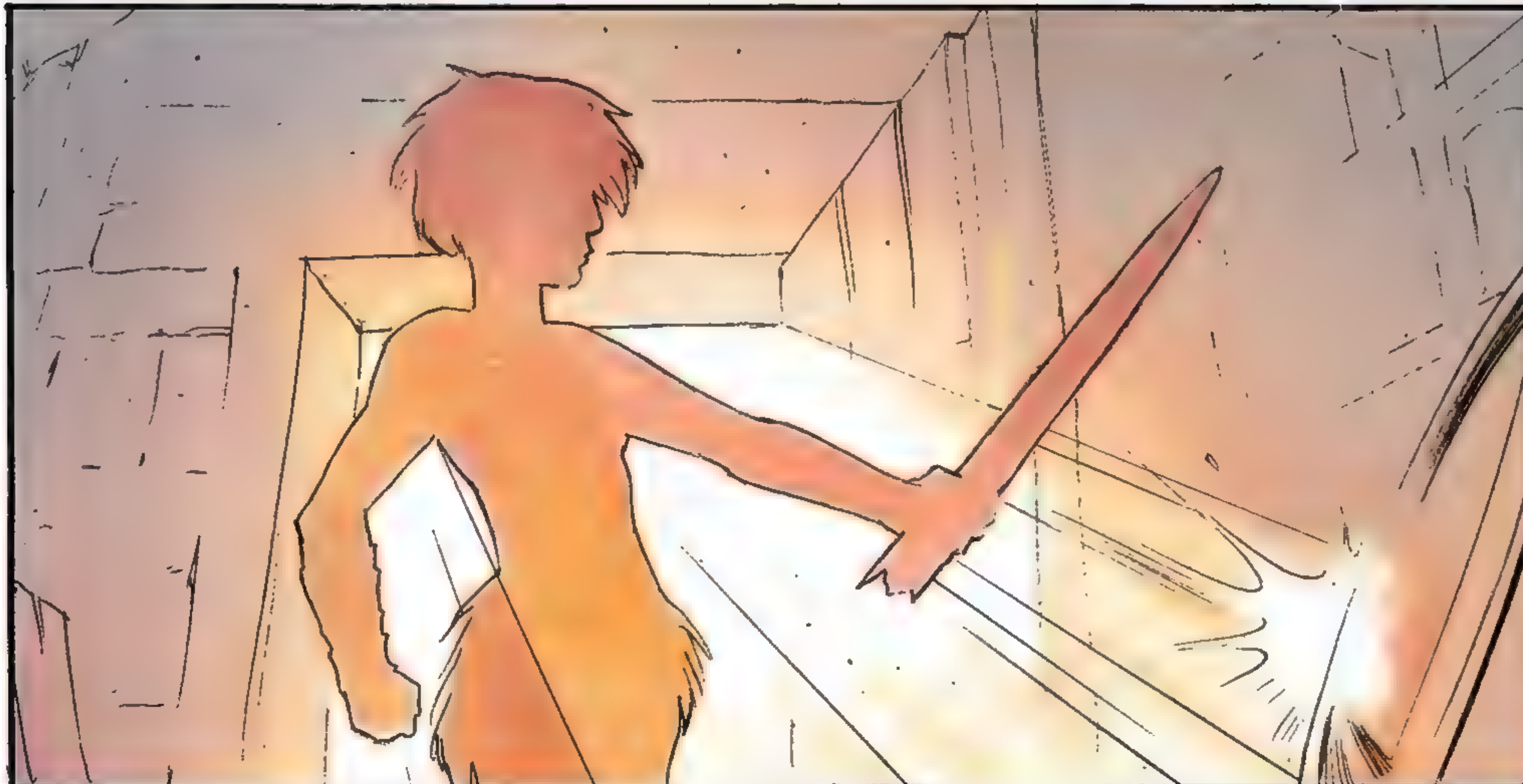
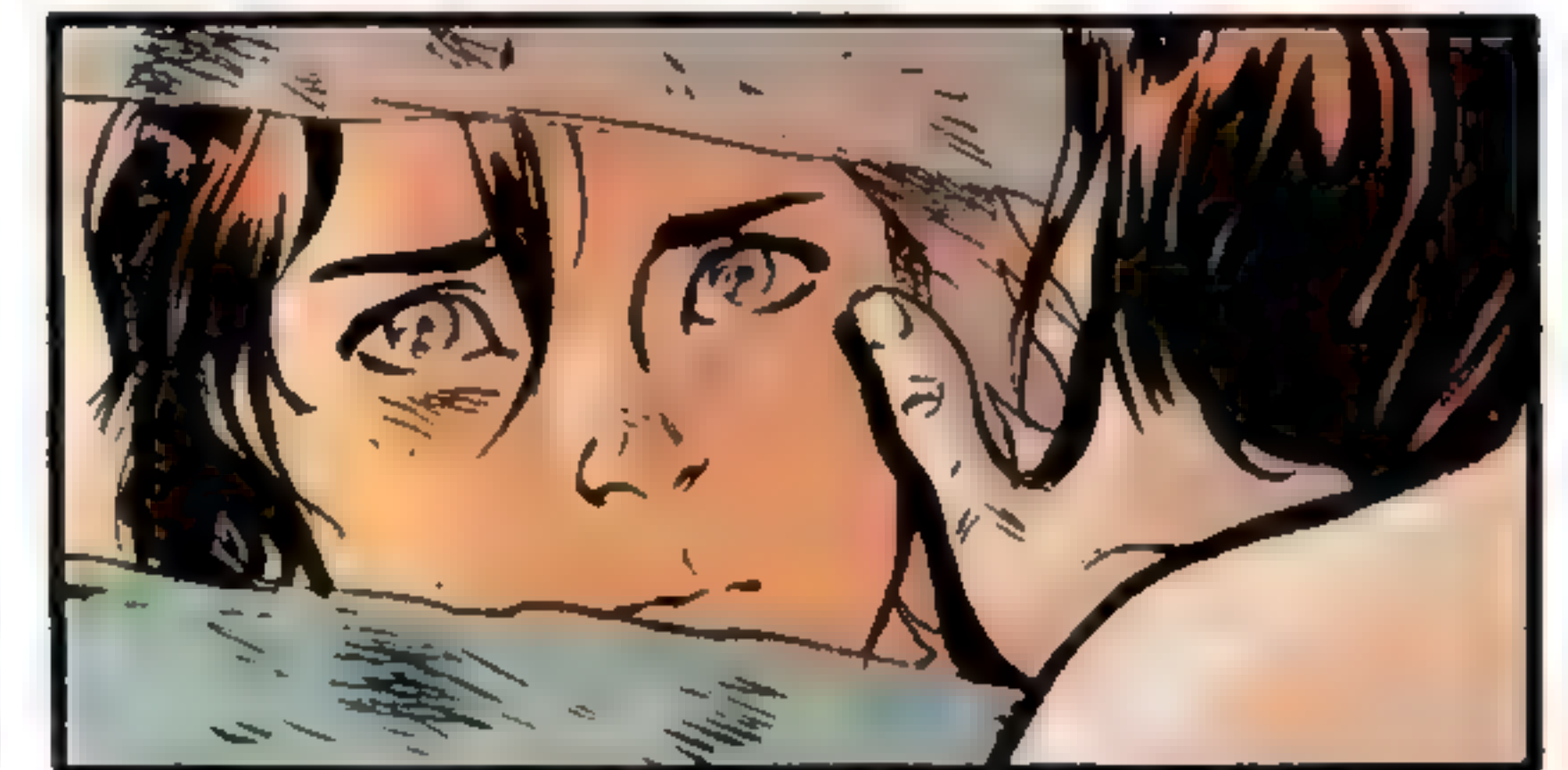
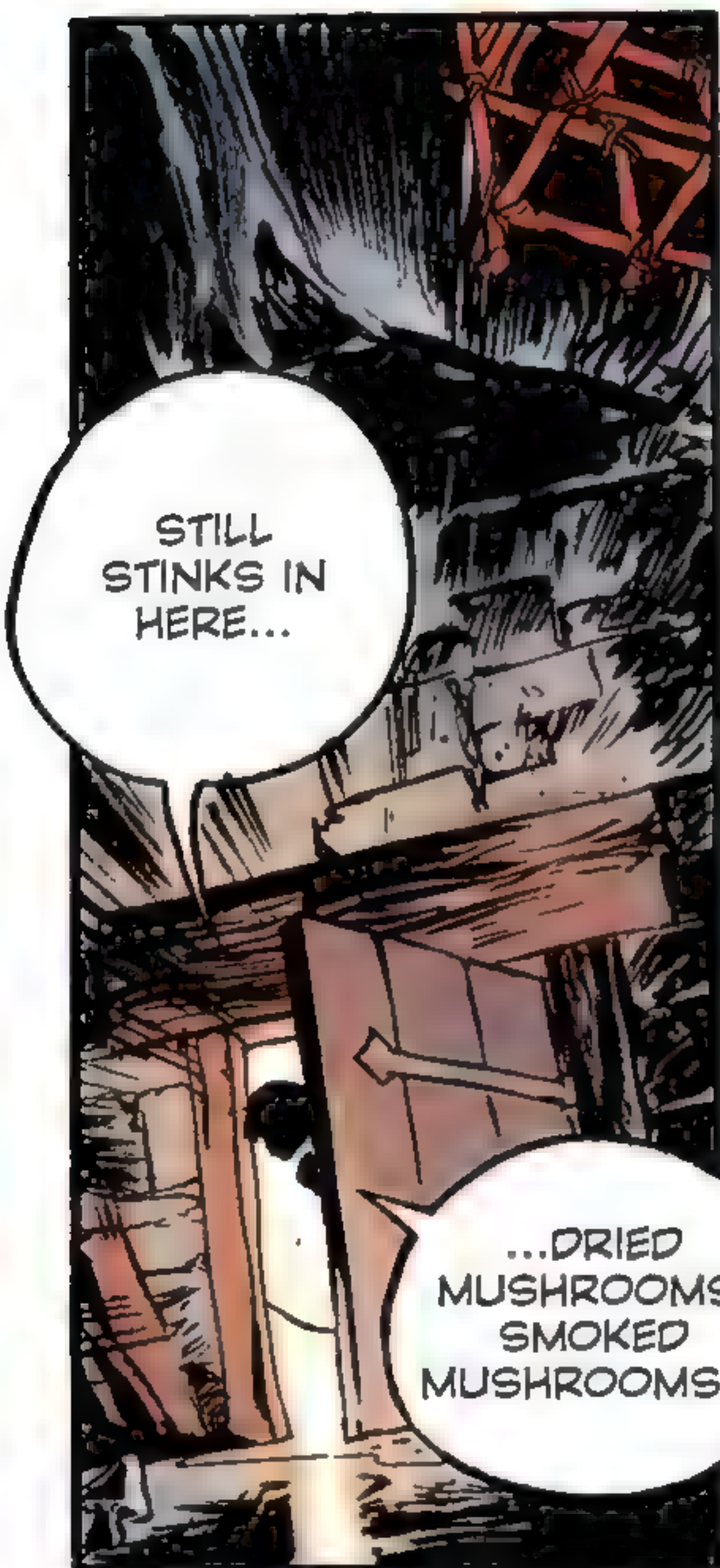
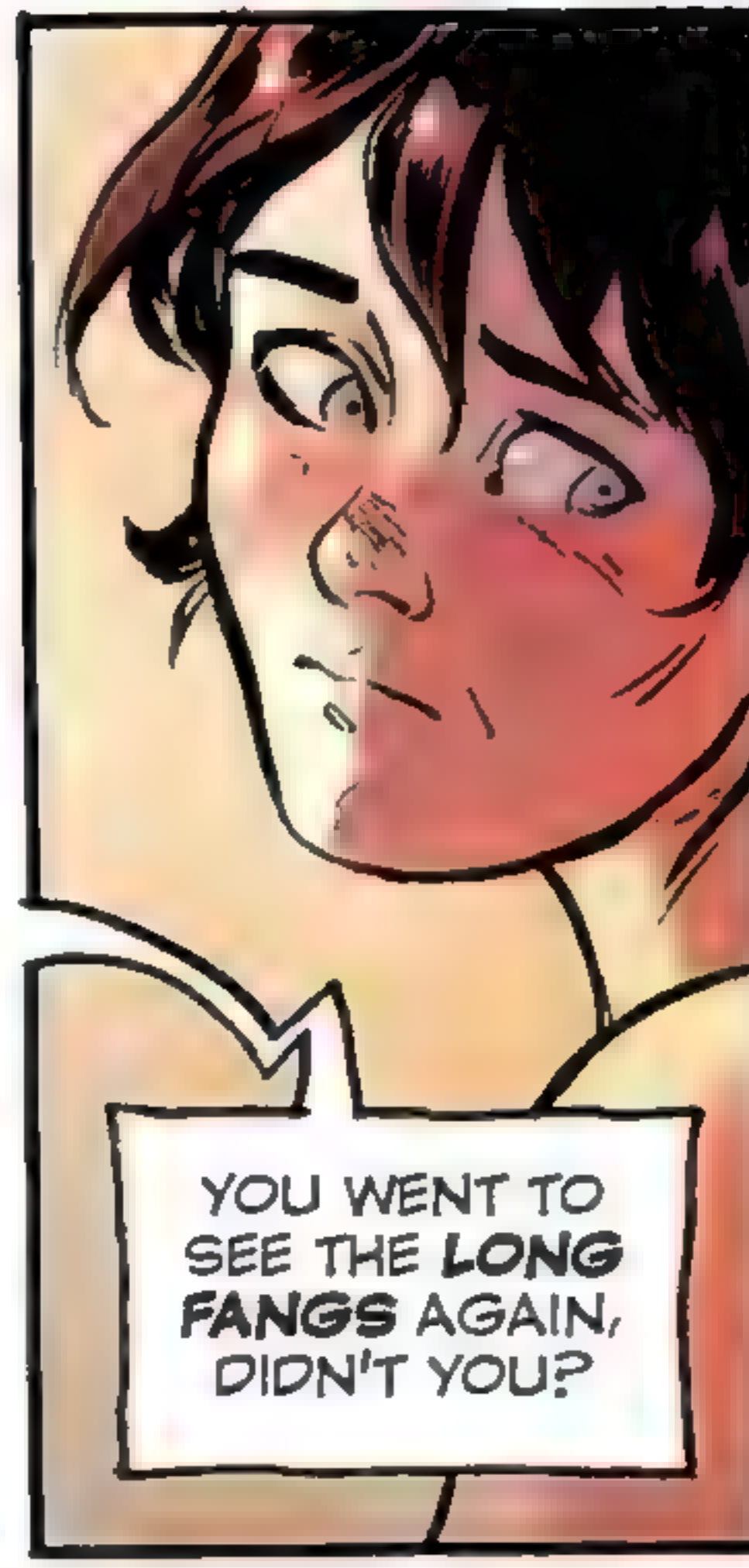
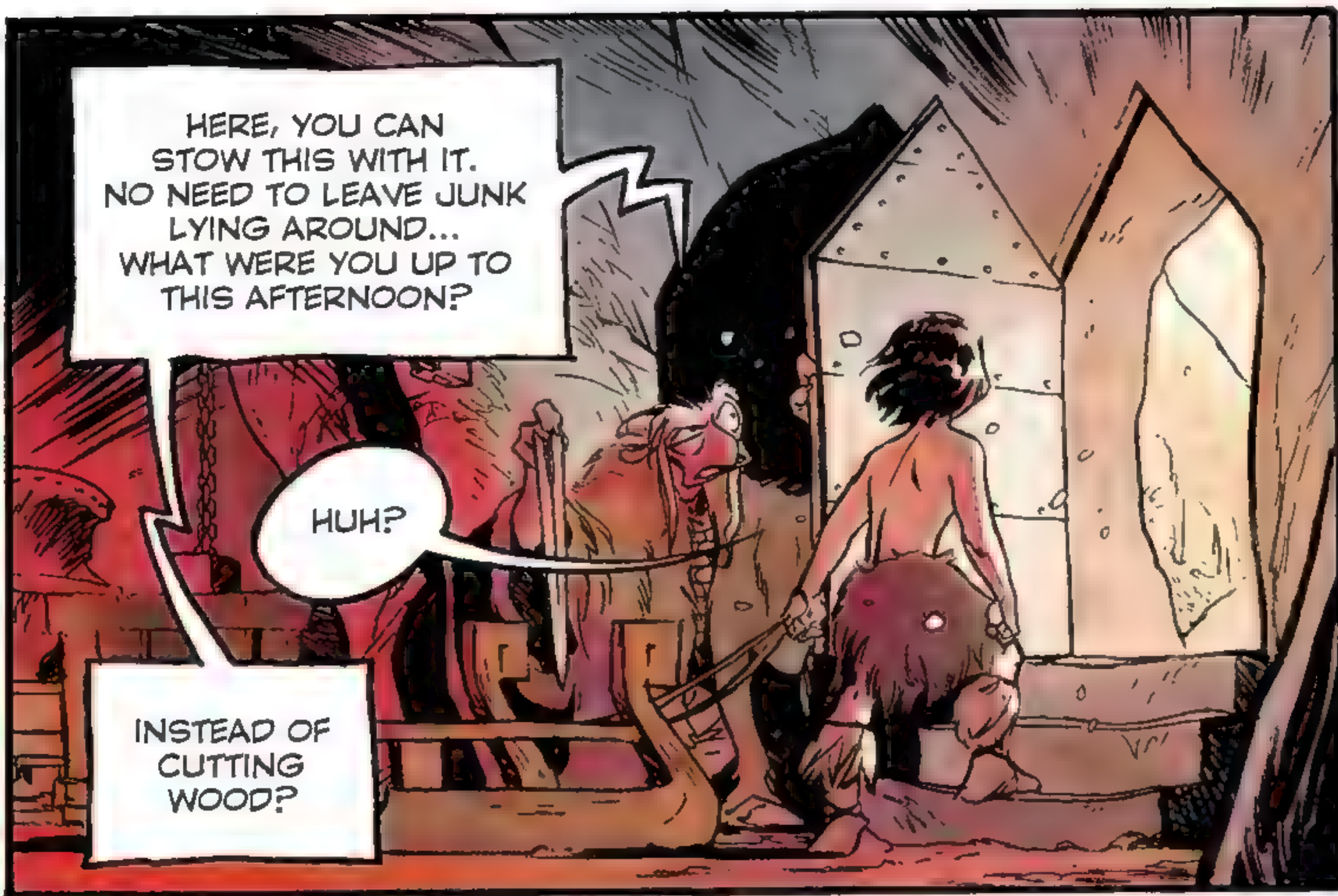
...THE  
ONE WHO  
BREATHES  
ICE!

NEVER  
MIND  
HIM.

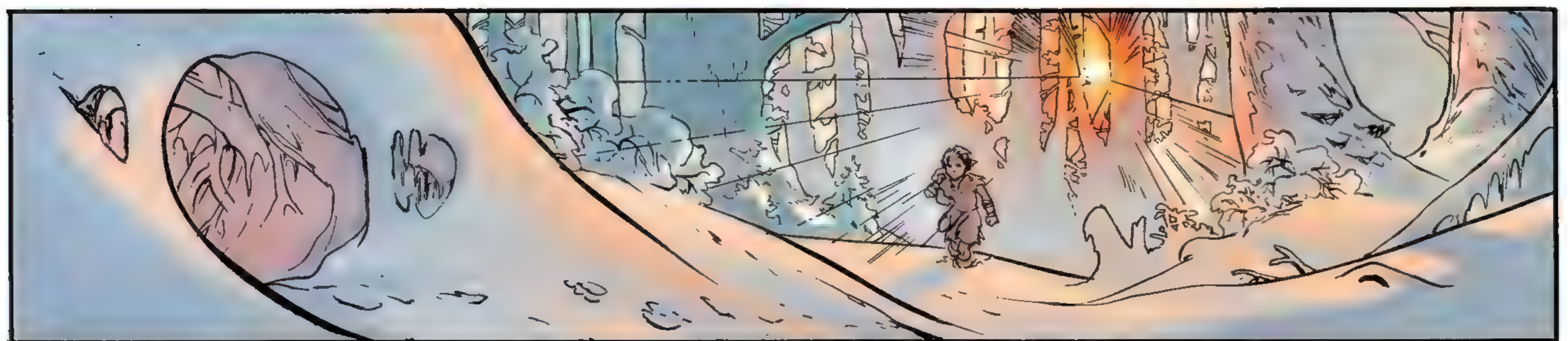
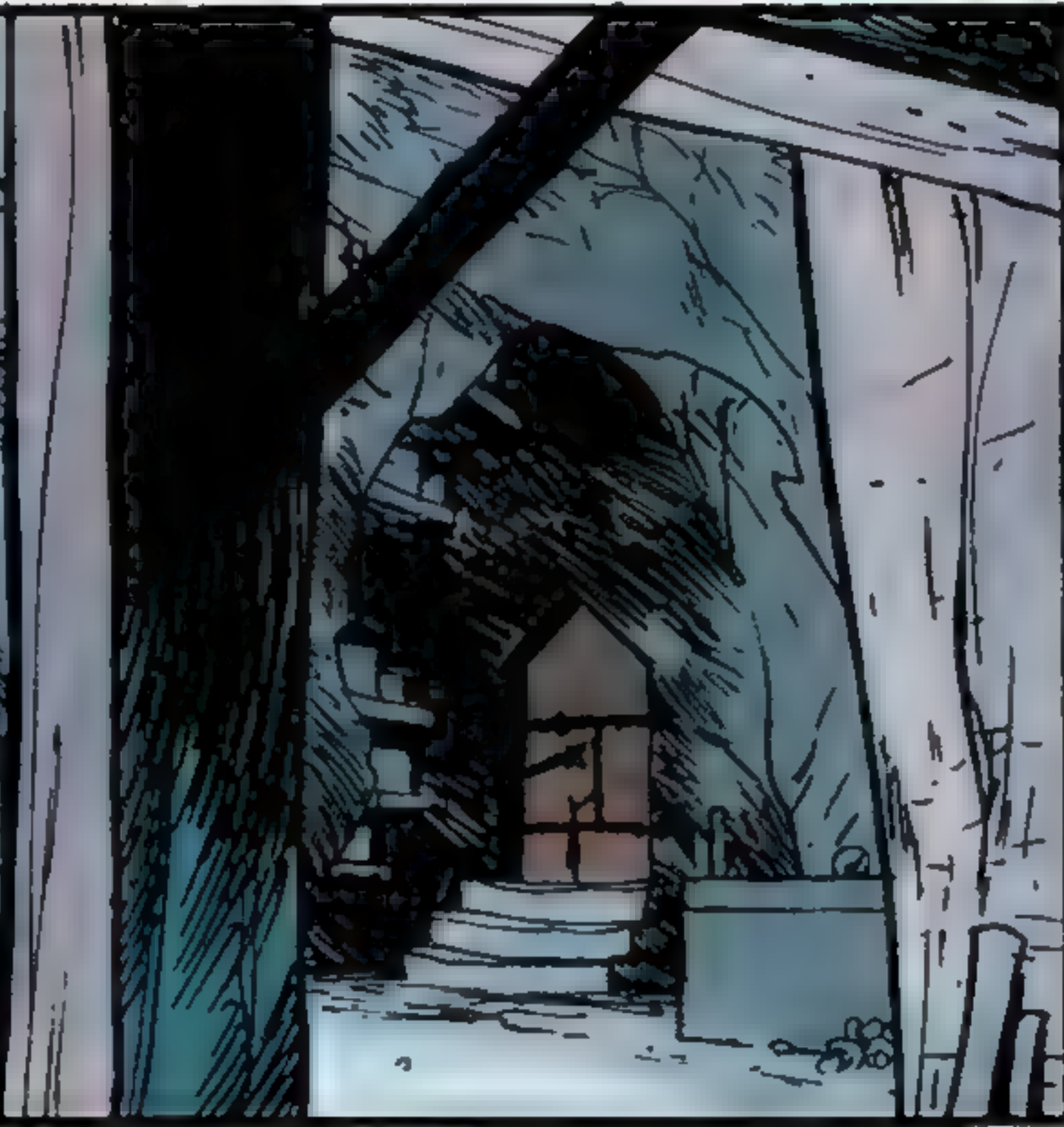
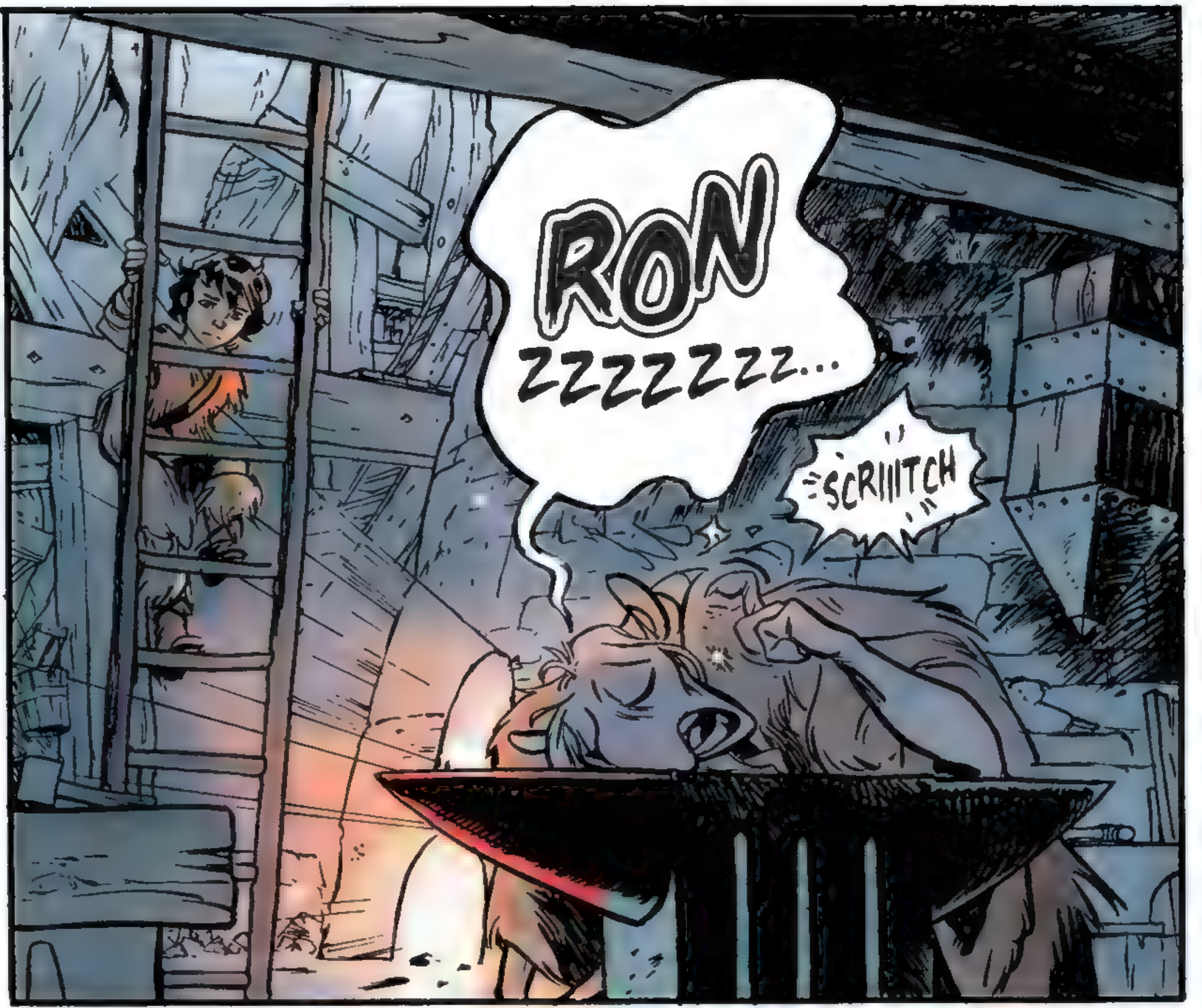
DID YOU PUT  
THE SLED  
AWAY?



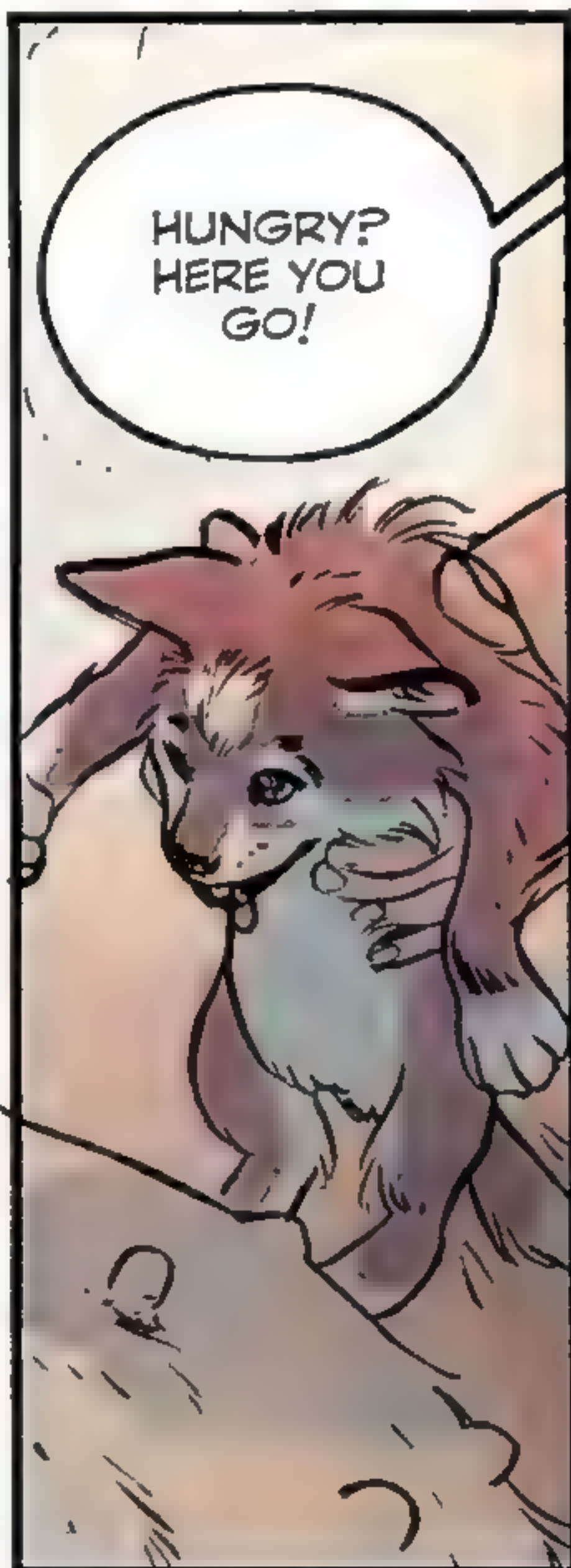
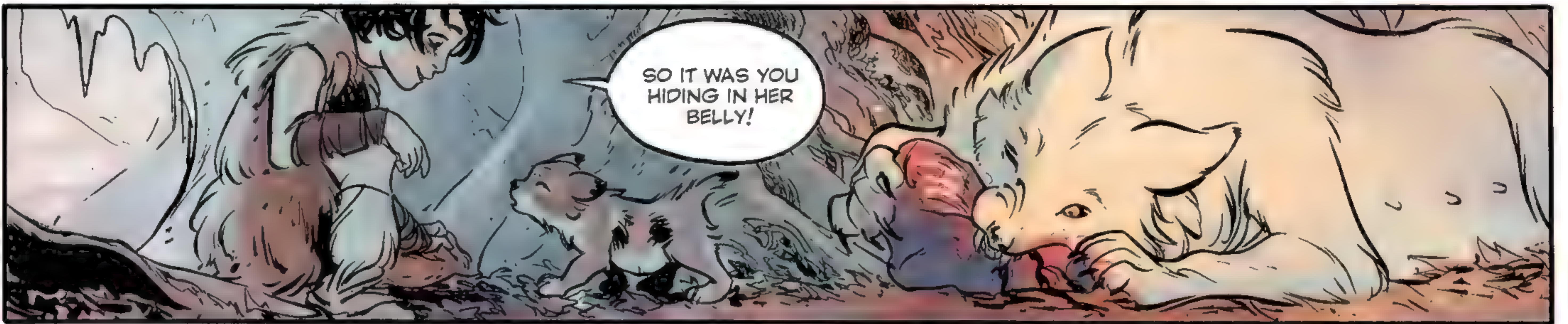
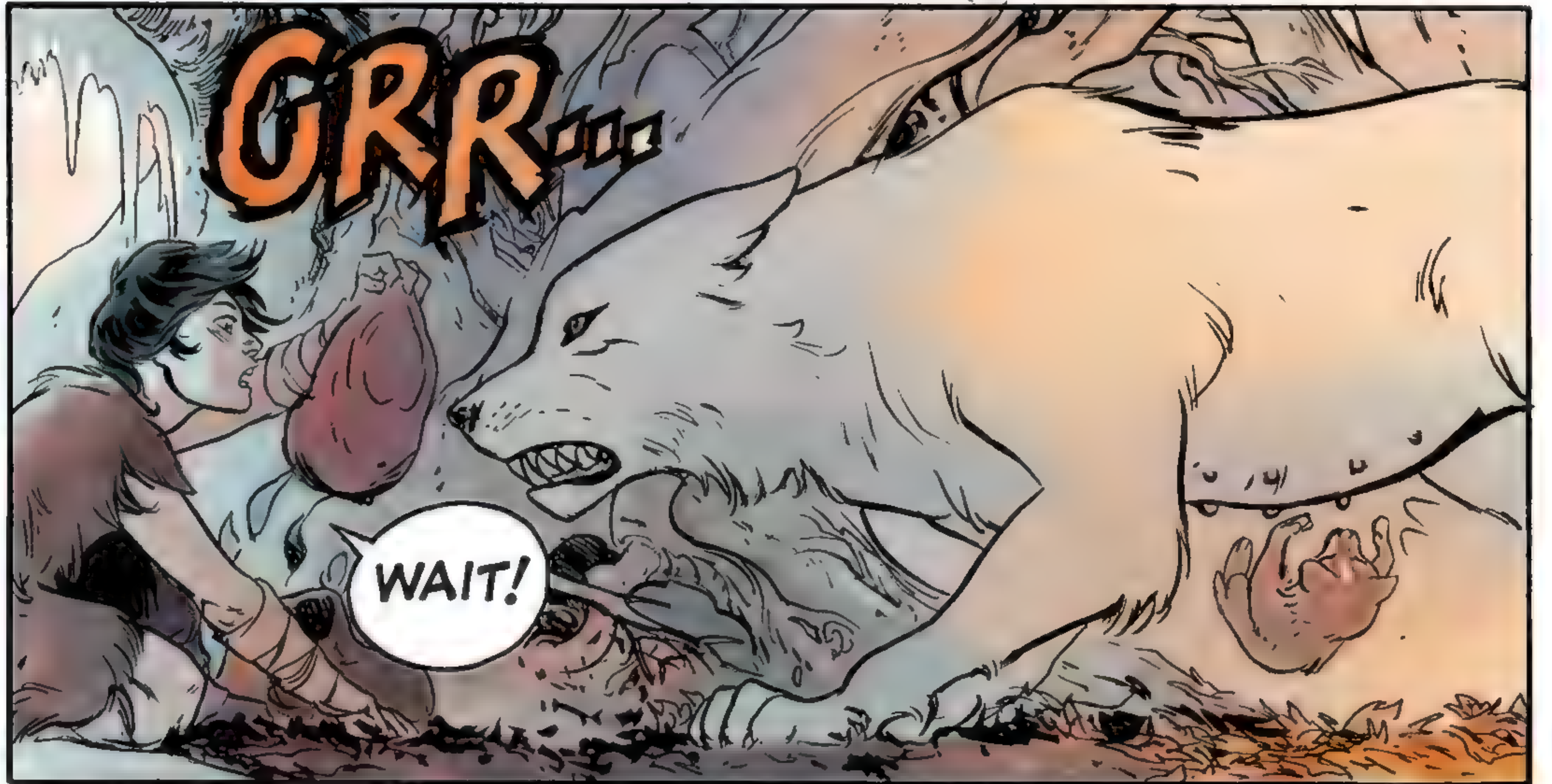
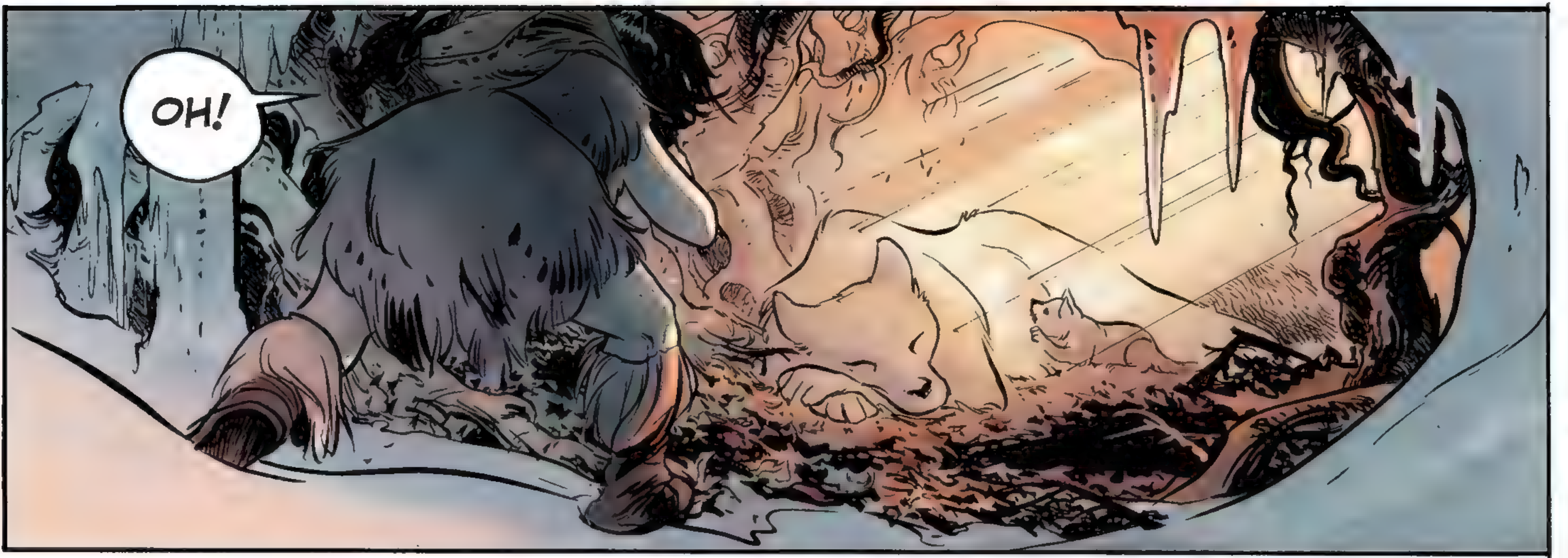




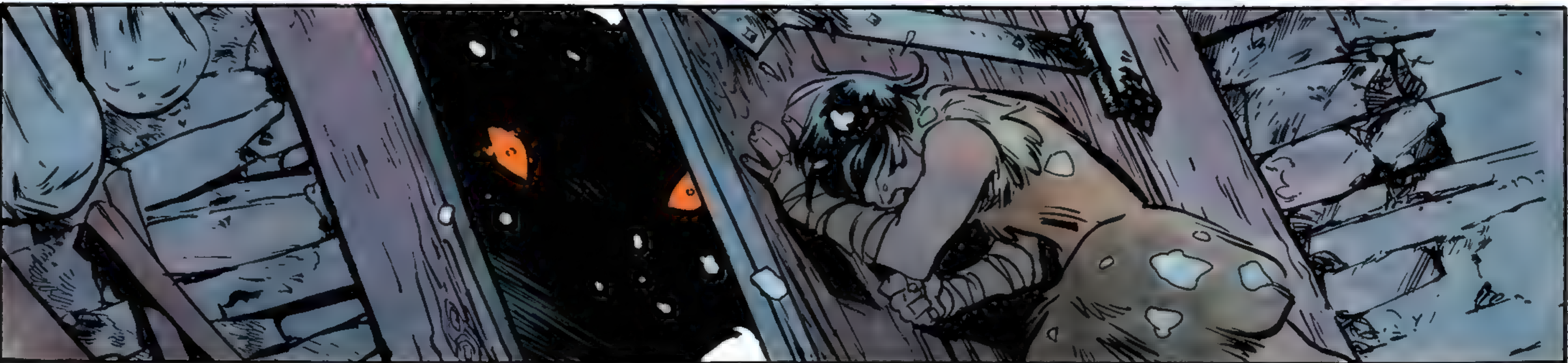
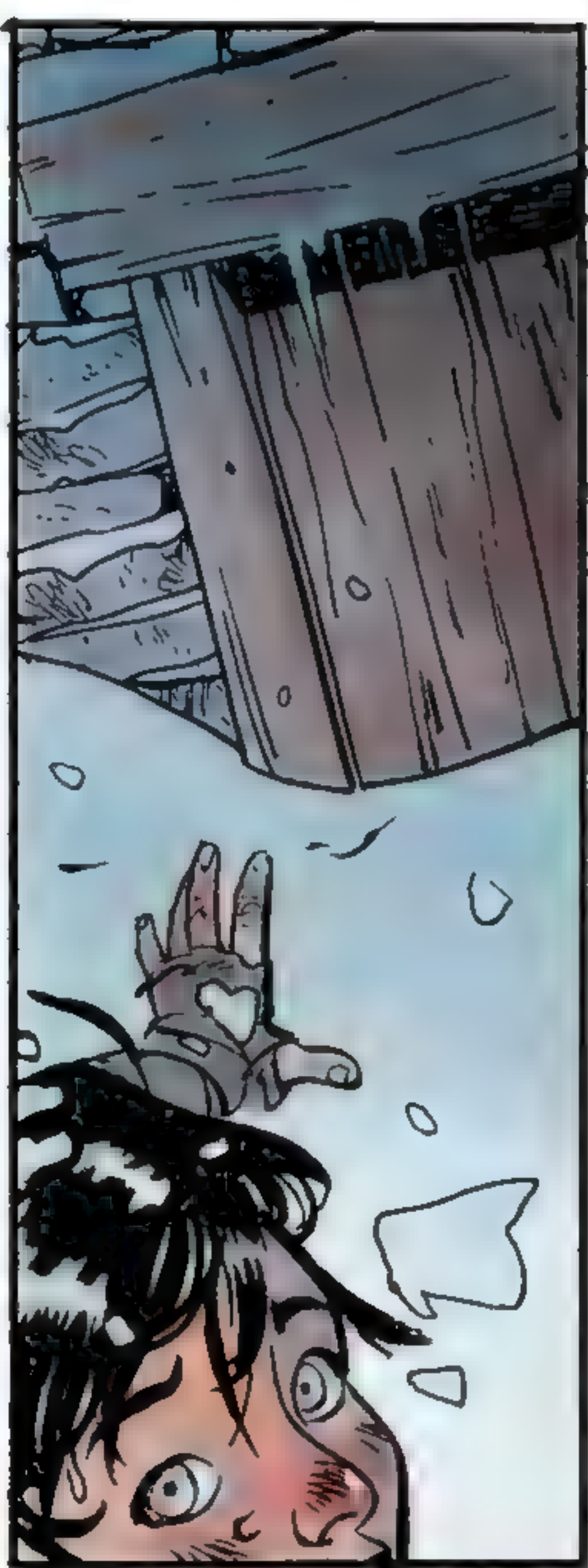
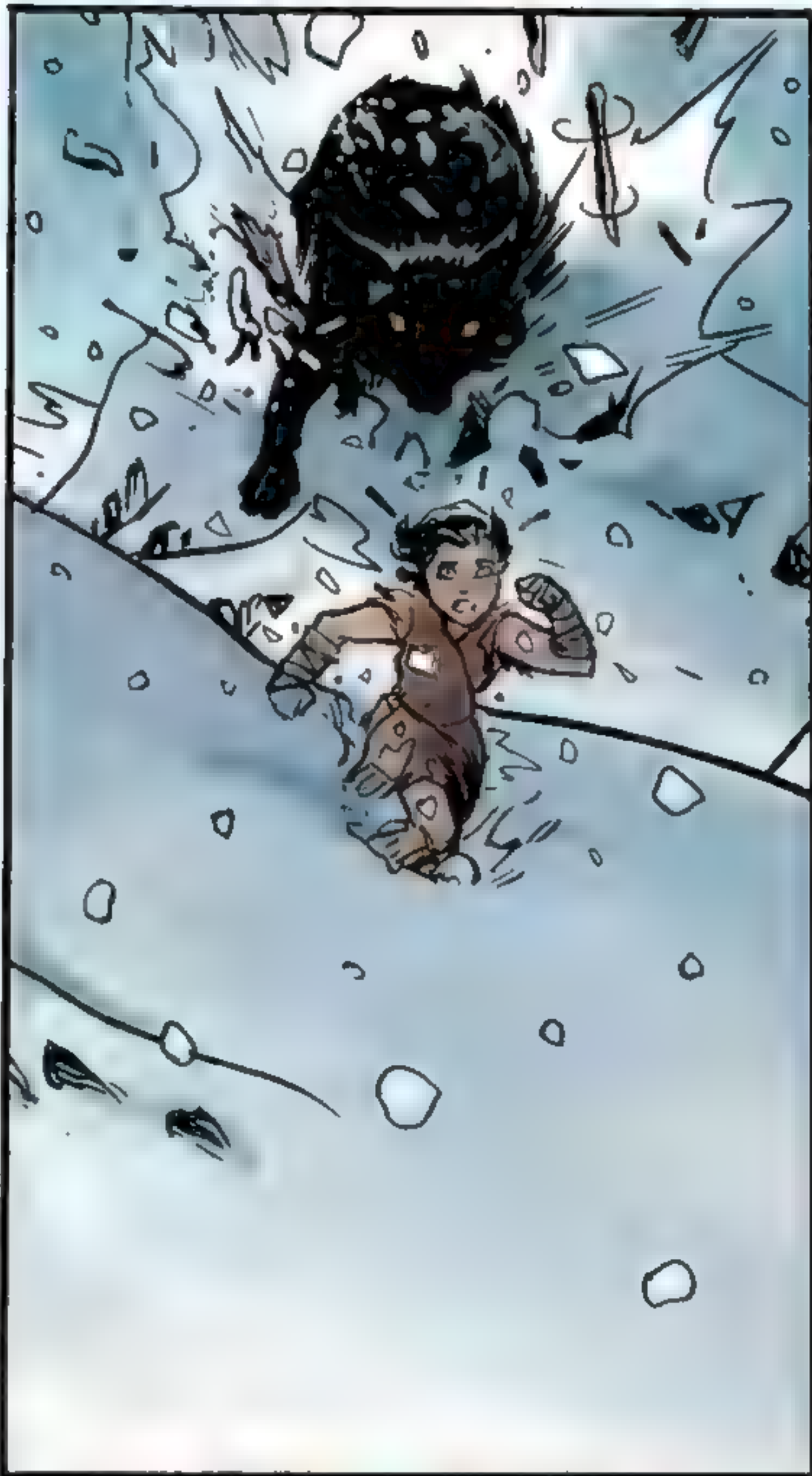
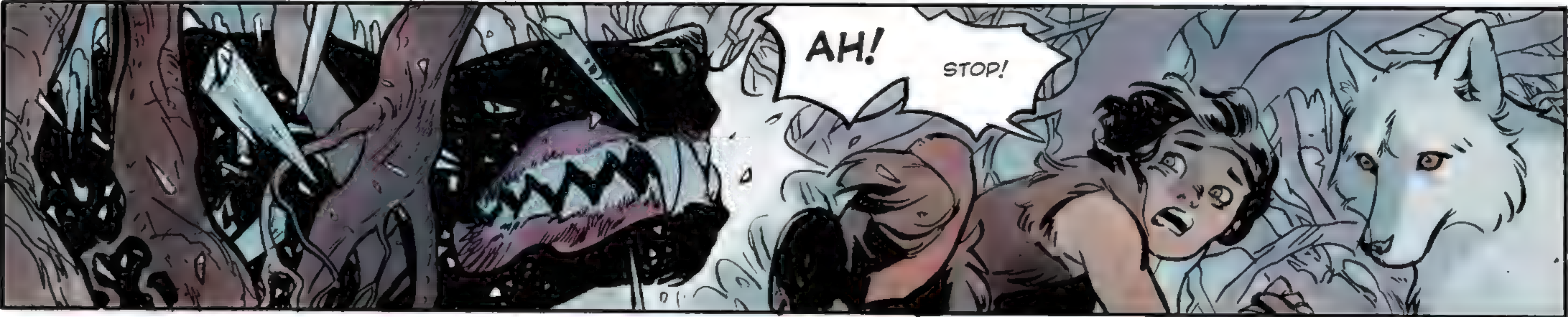




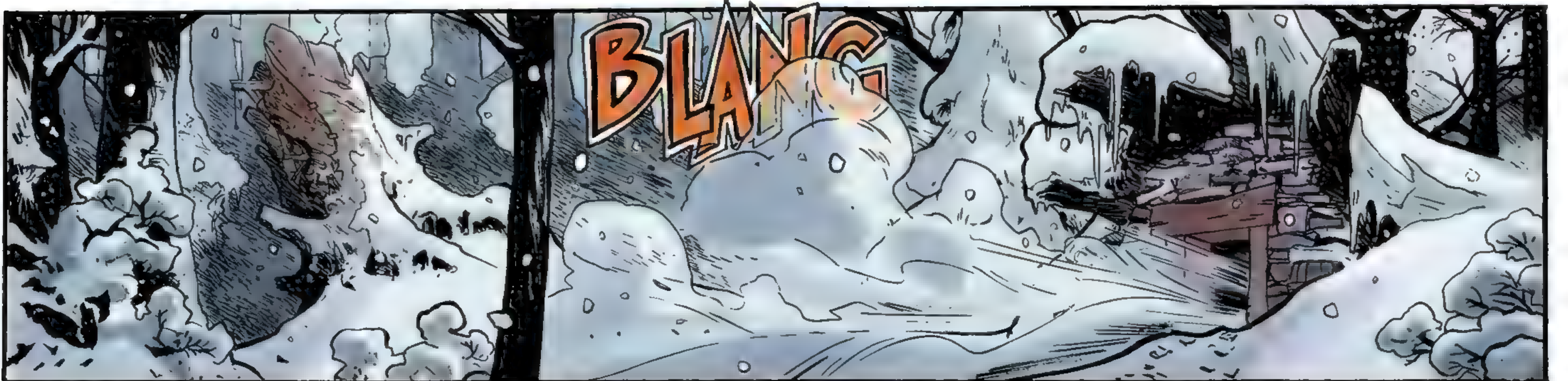




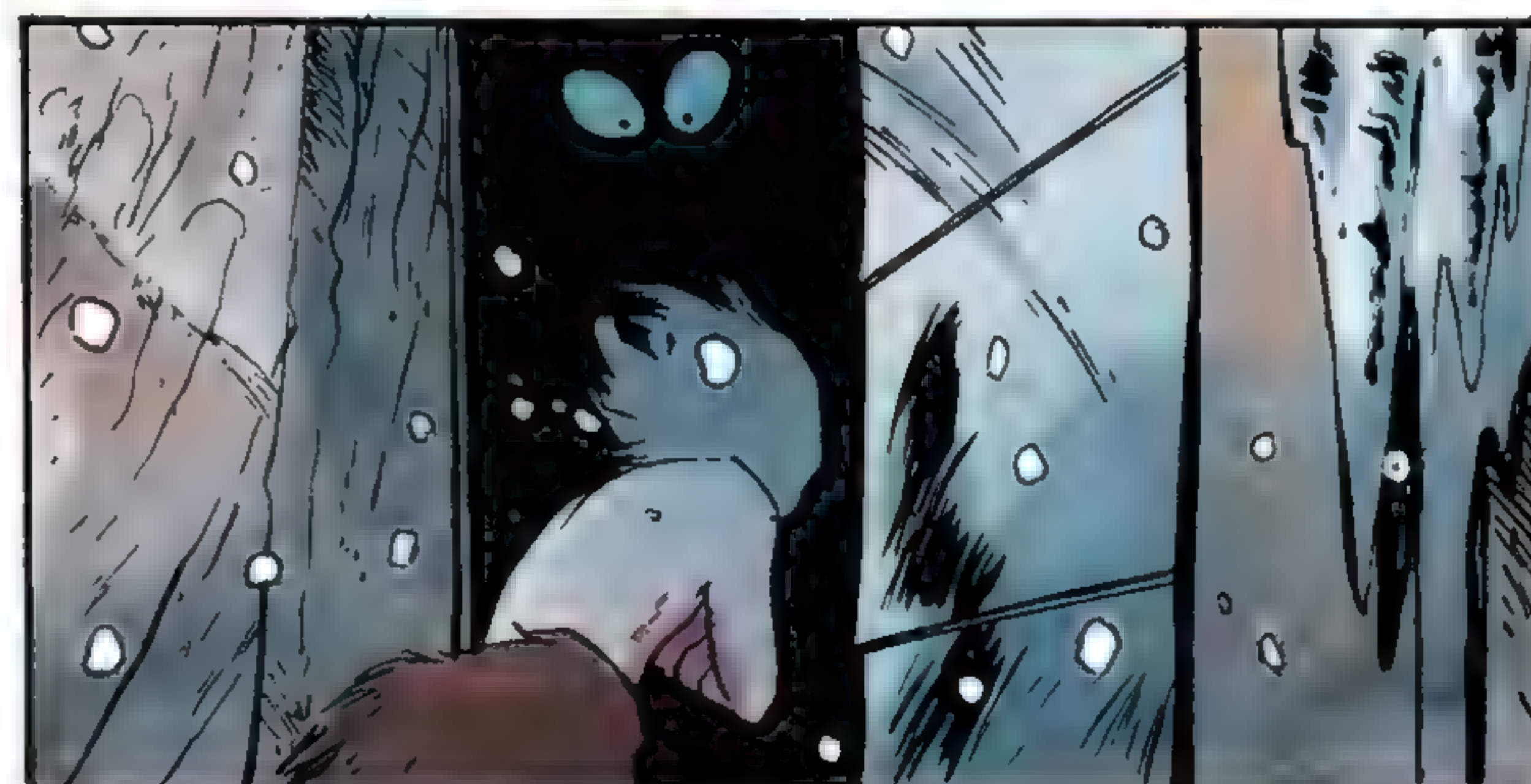
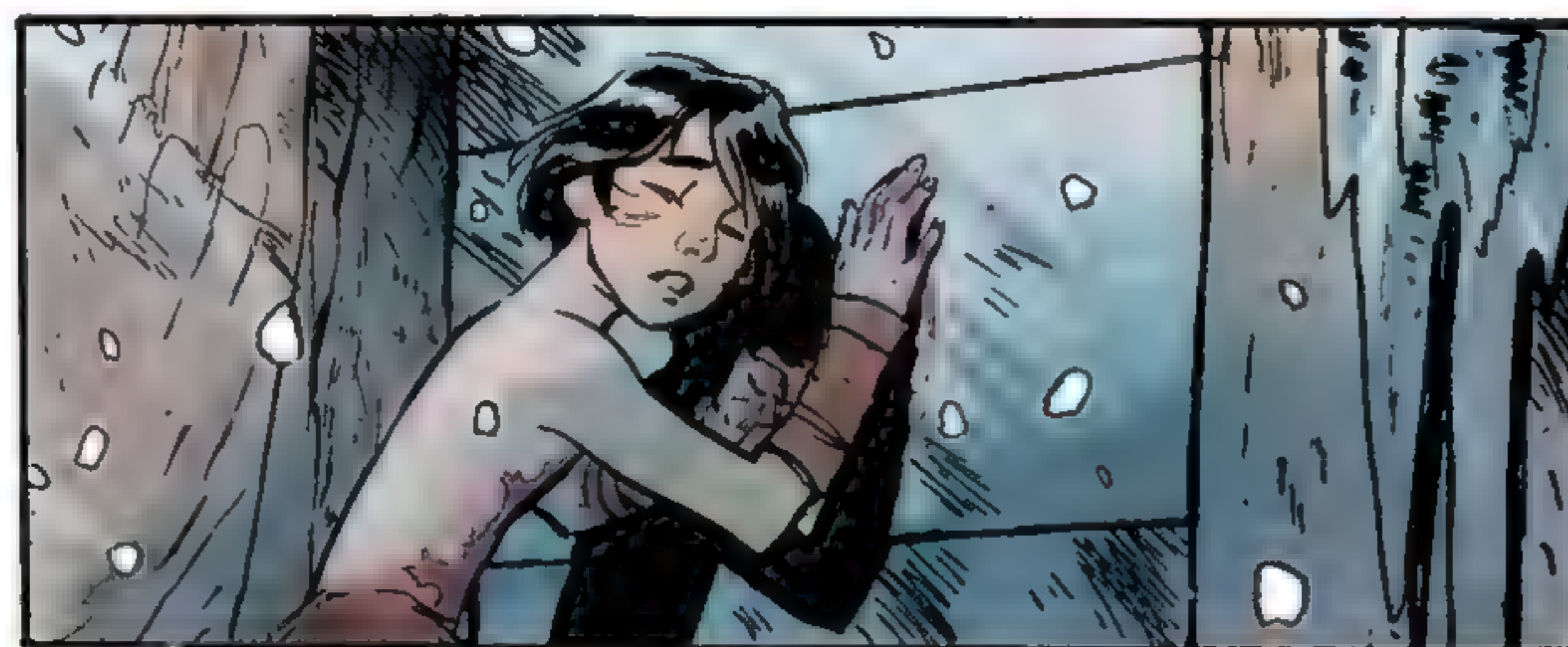
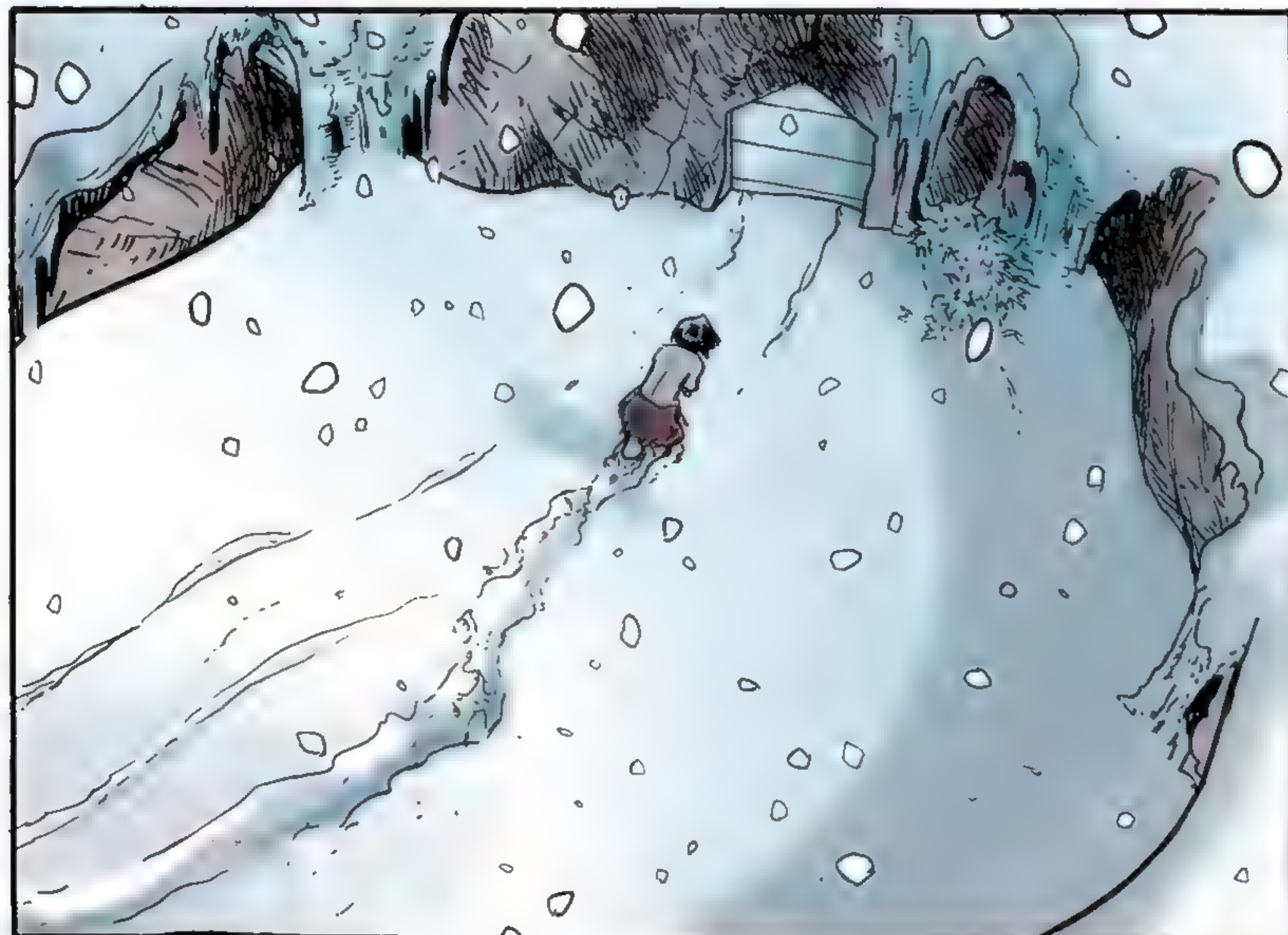
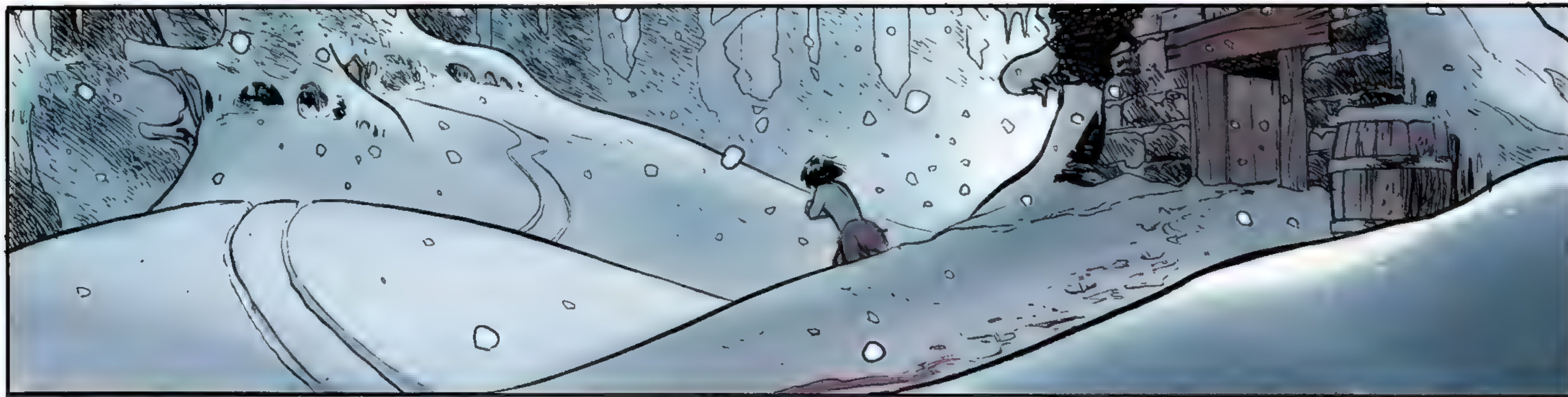
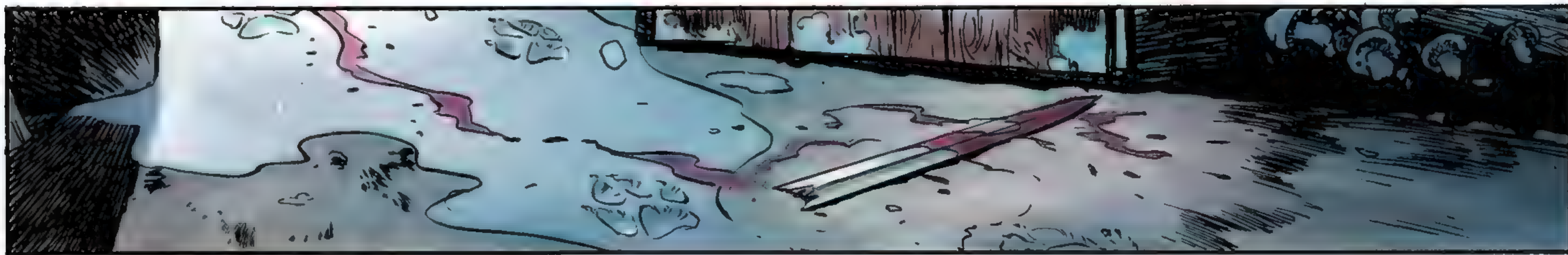
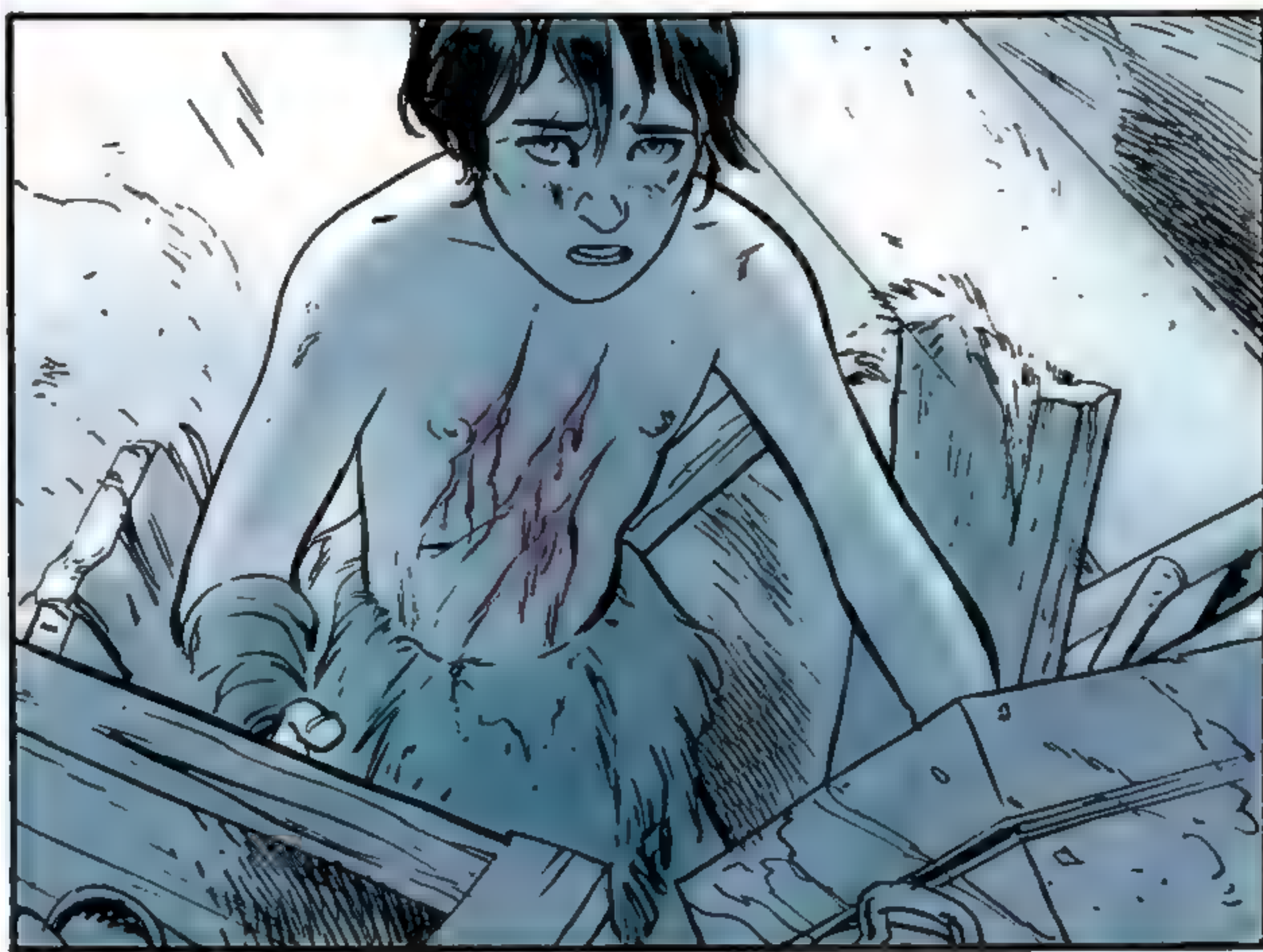
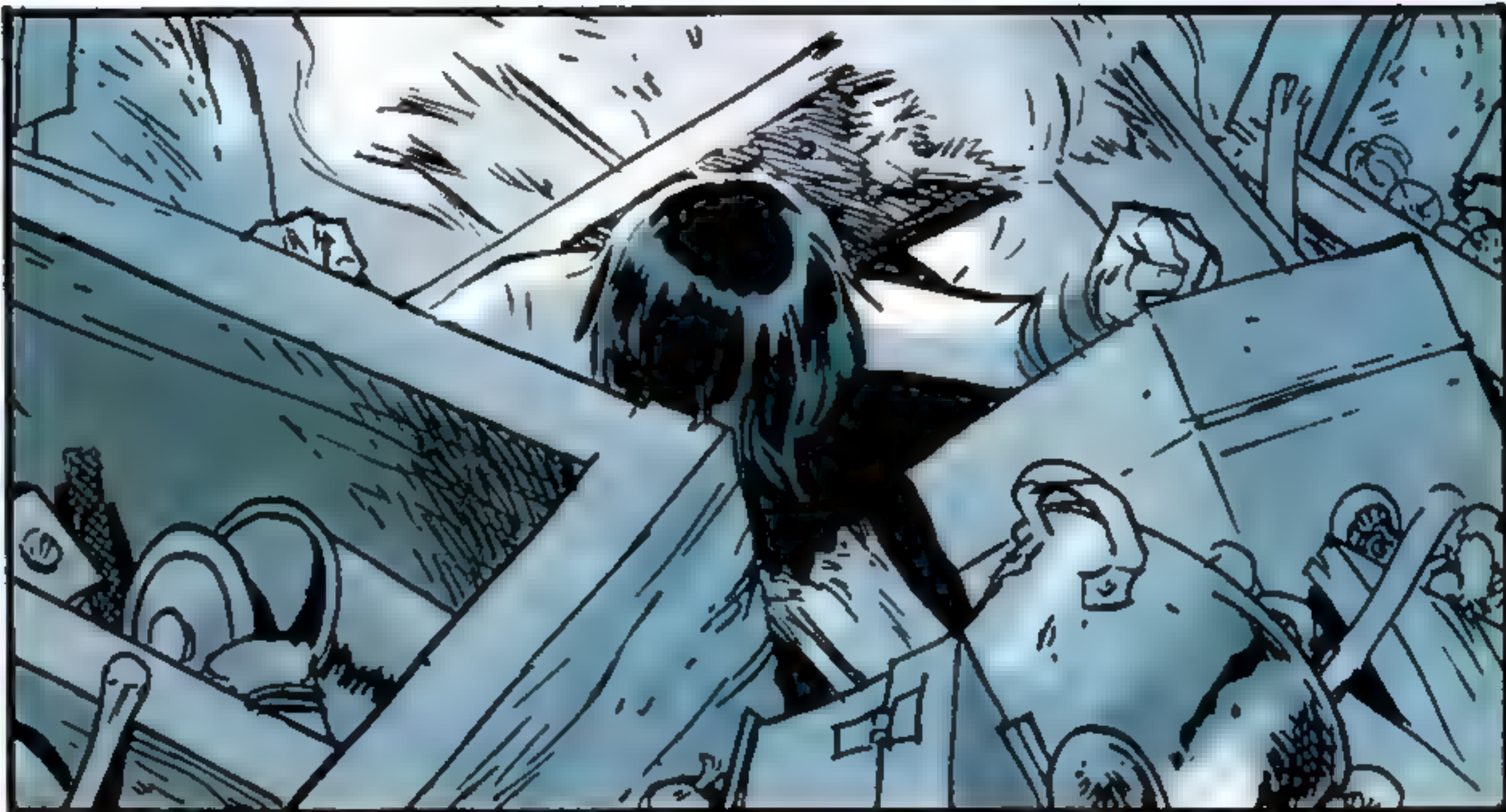
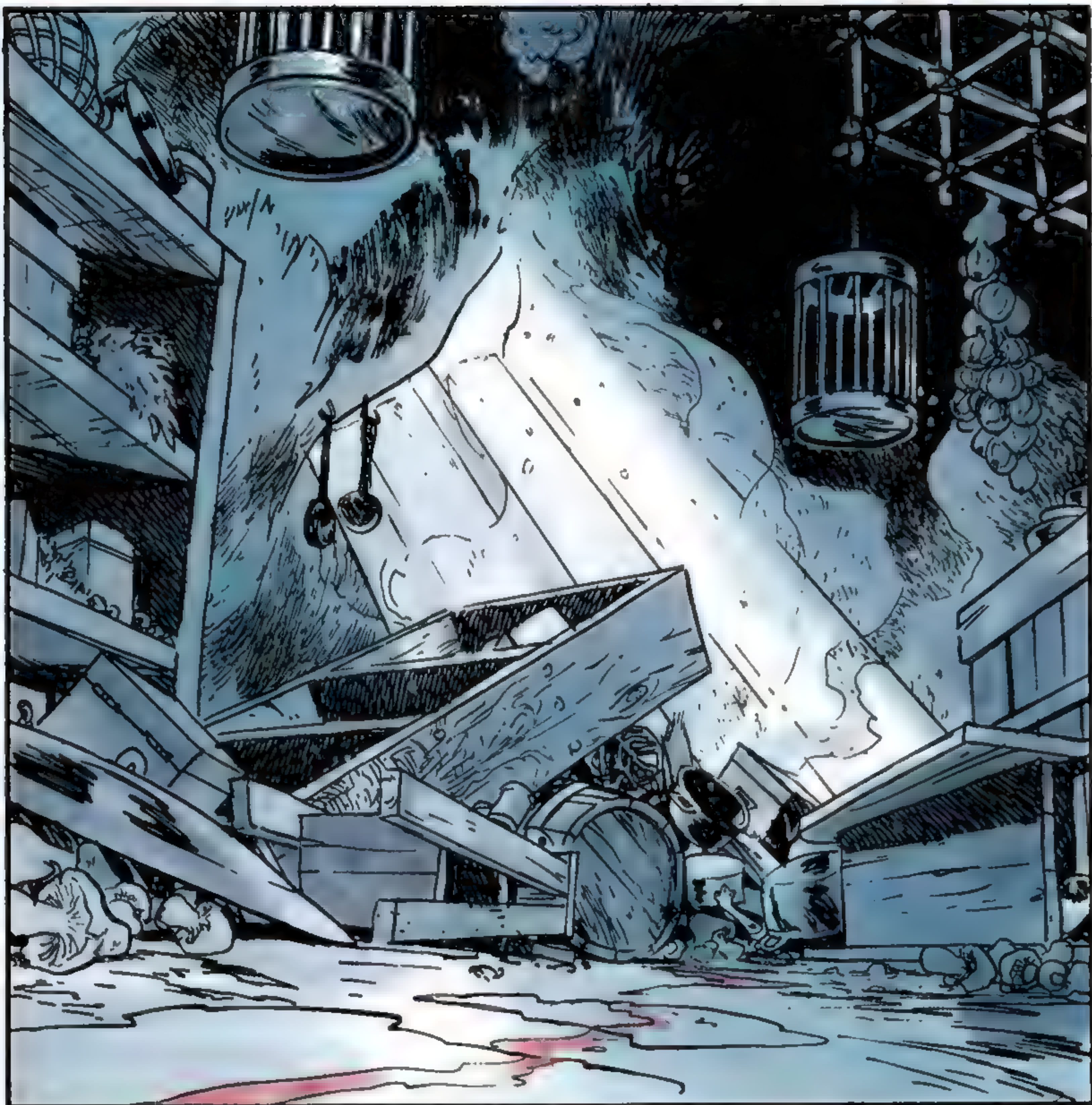
















HOW IS  
HE?

BETTER.

THE  
NIBELUNG  
DRESSED HIS  
WOUNDS.

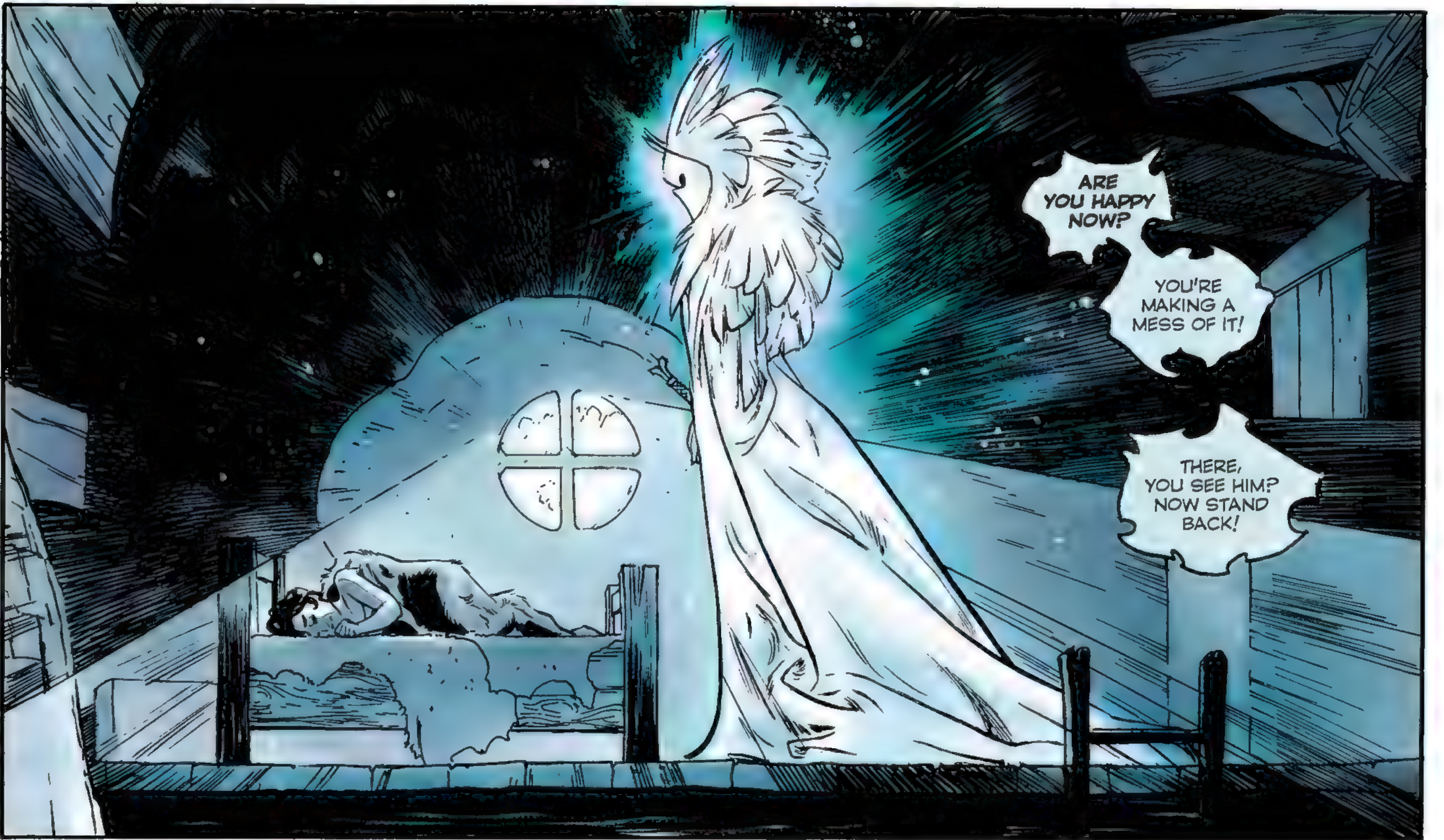


HEY!

MOVE BACK!  
NOT SO CLOSE.

I WANT  
TO GET A  
GOOD LOOK  
AT HIM.

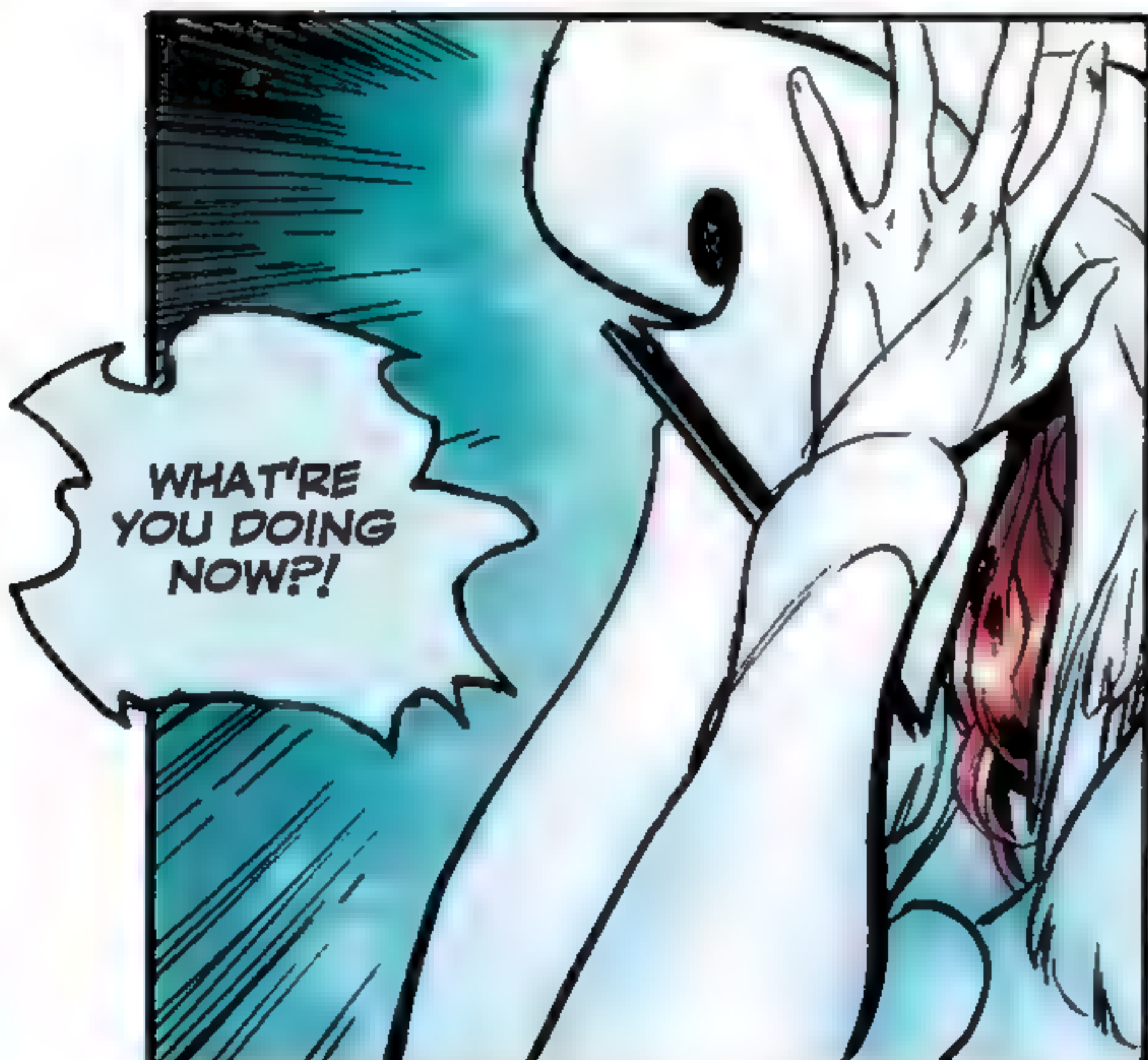
NO  
CLOSER!



ARE  
YOU HAPPY  
NOW?

YOU'RE  
MAKING A  
MESS OF IT!

THERE,  
YOU SEE HIM?  
NOW STAND  
BACK!



WHAT'RE  
YOU DOING  
NOW?!

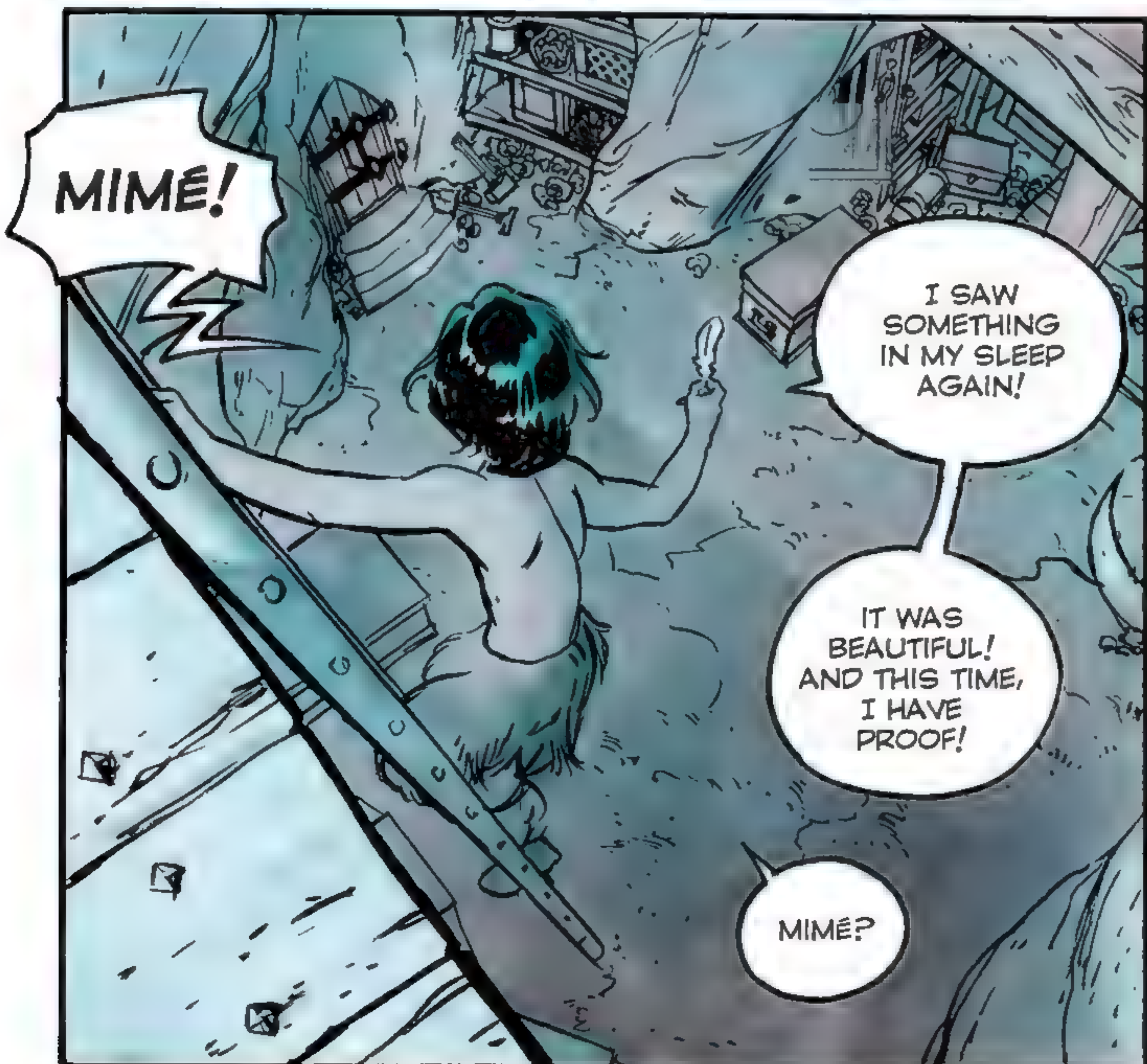
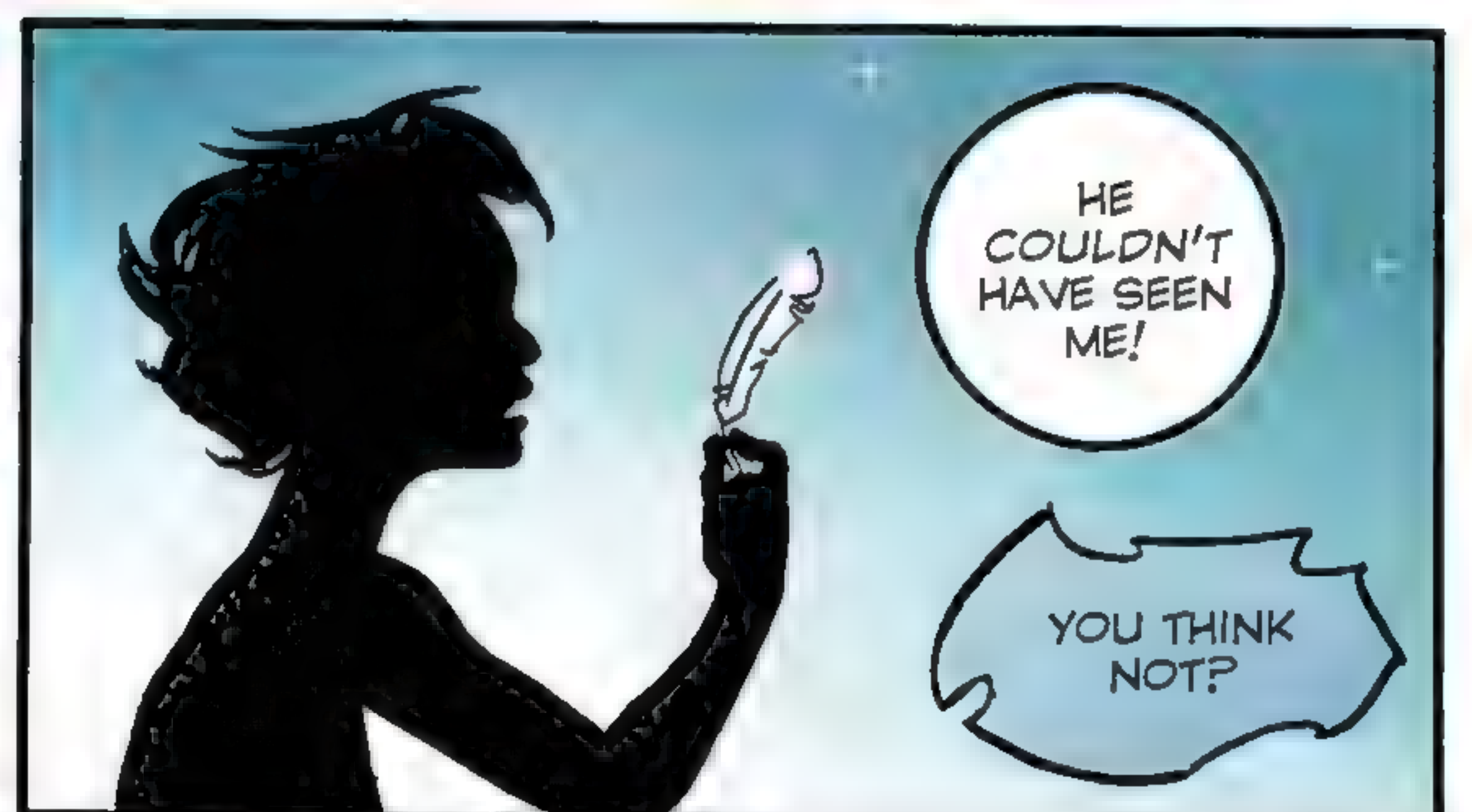
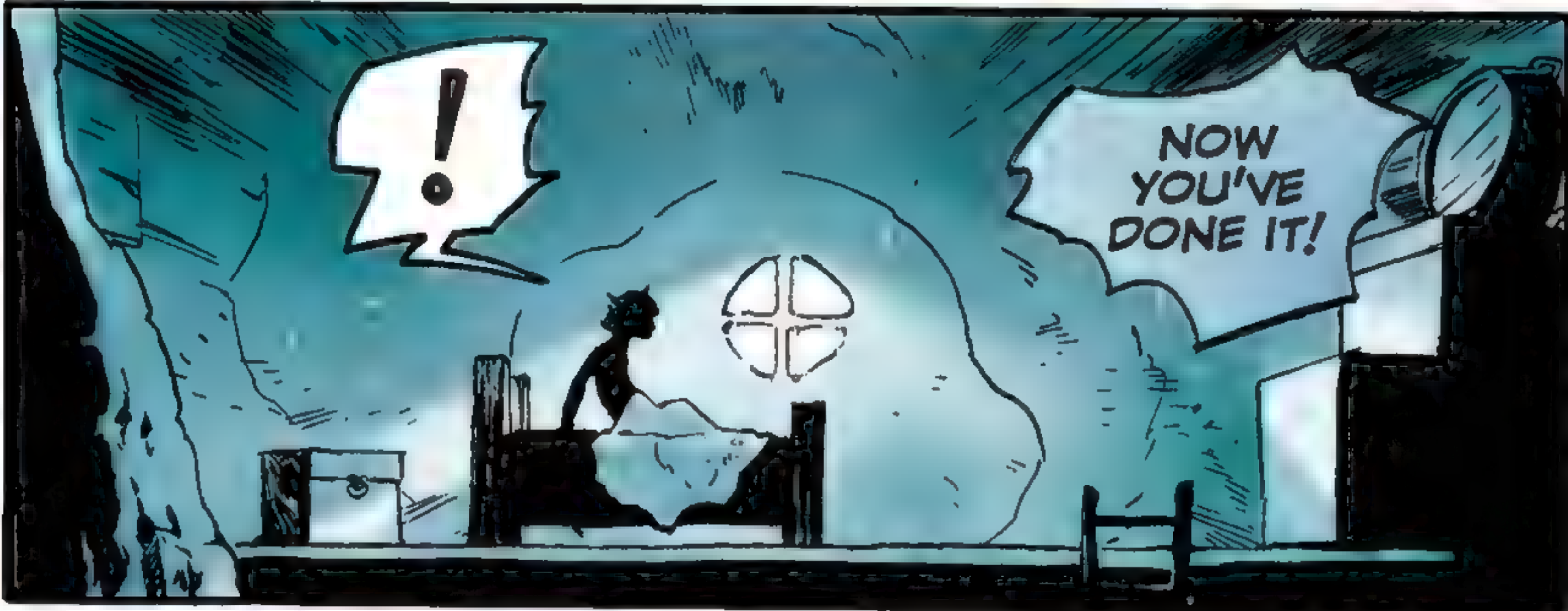
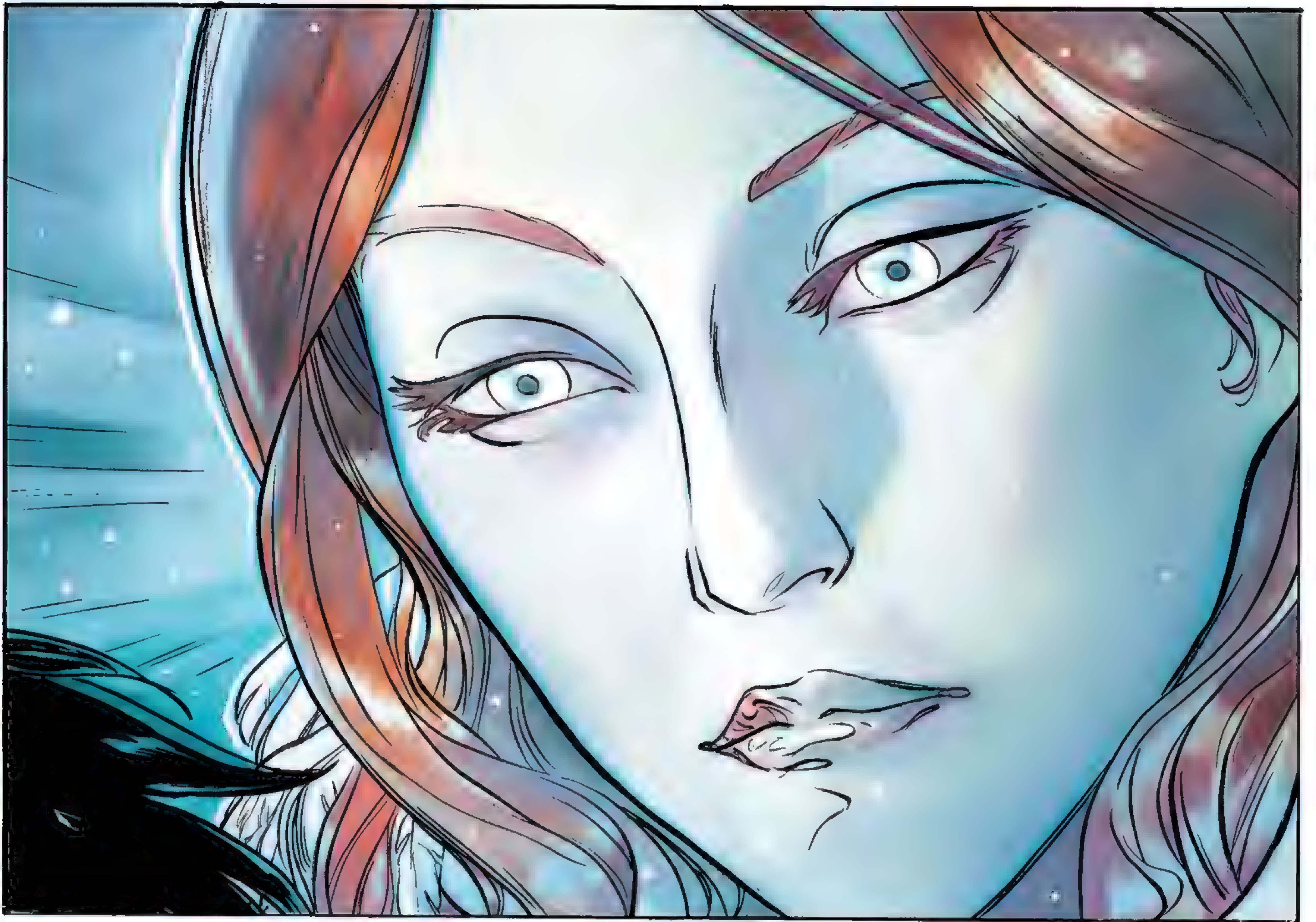


DON'T!

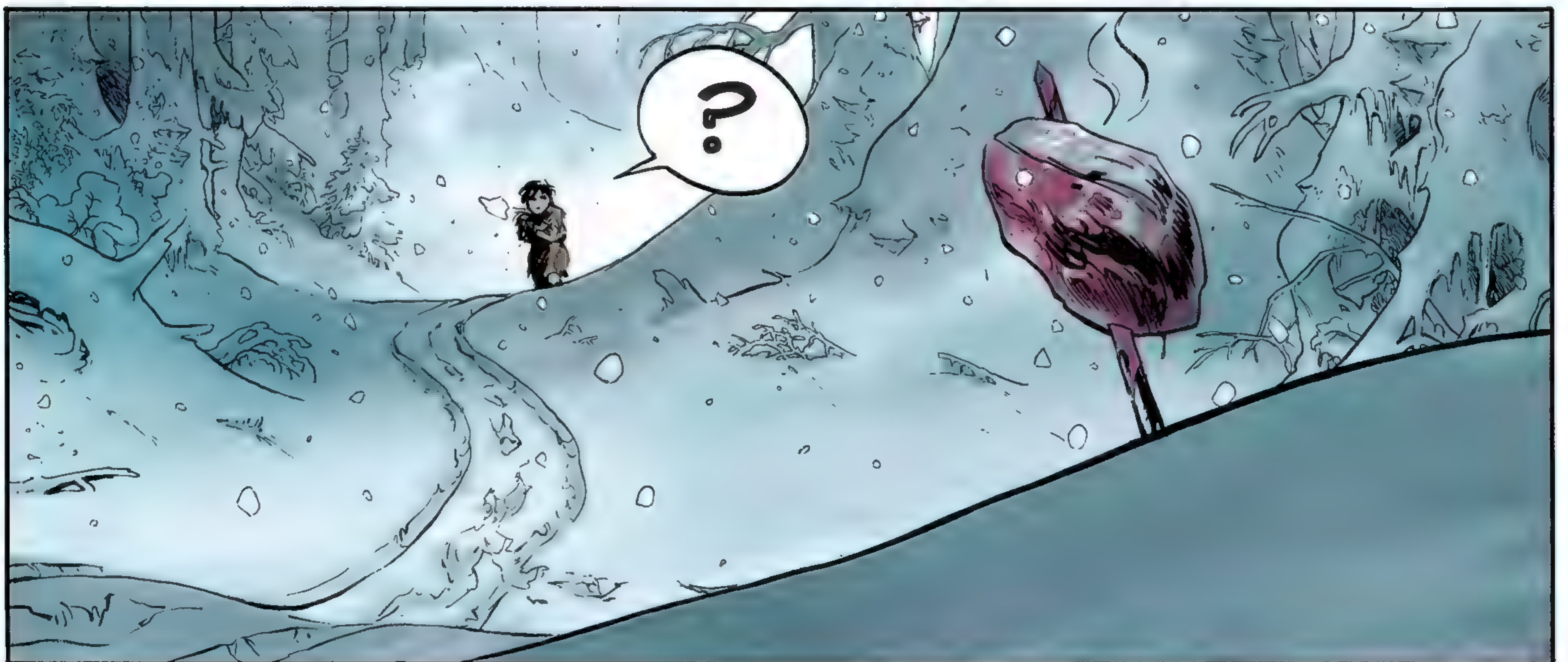
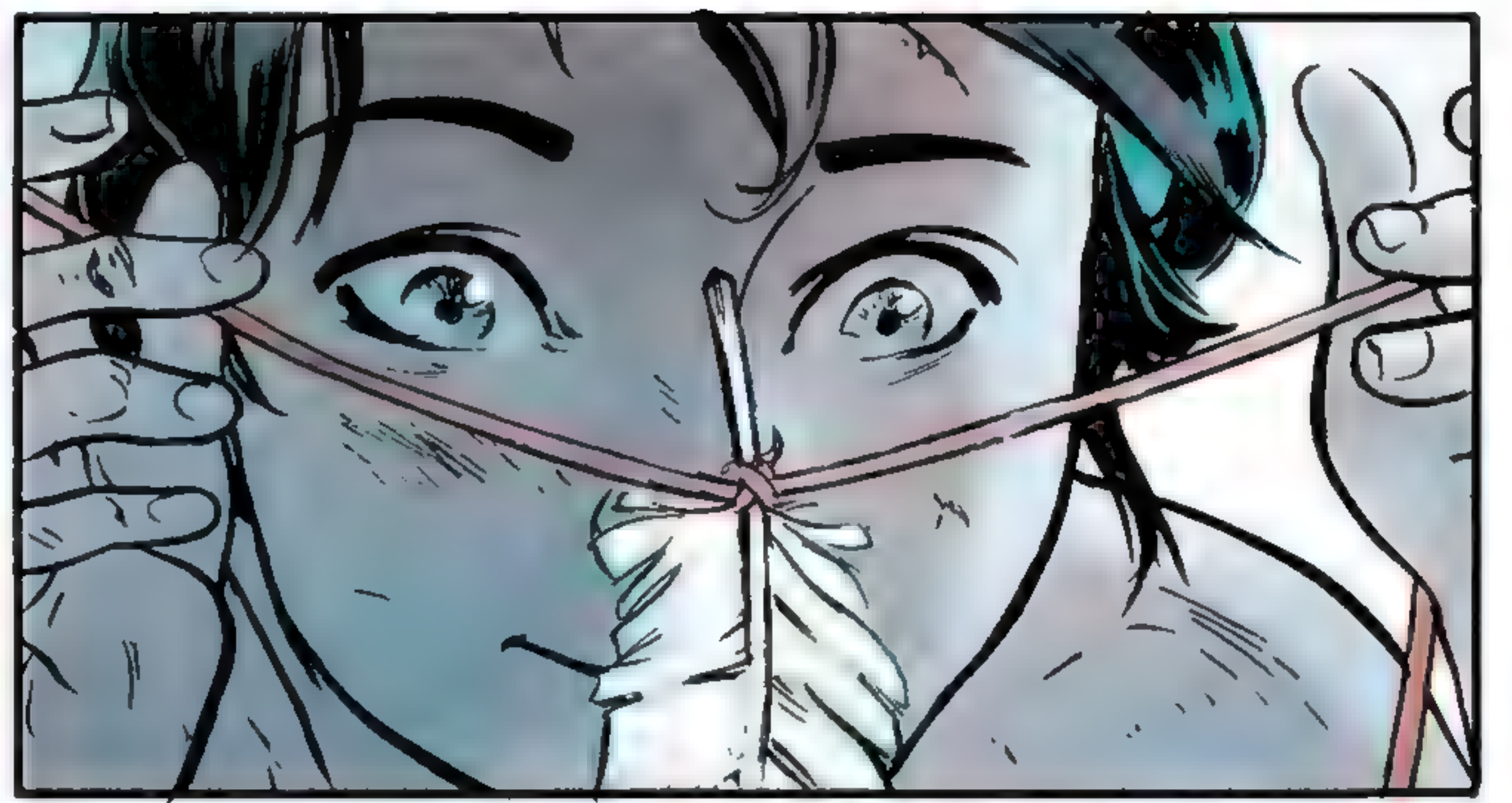
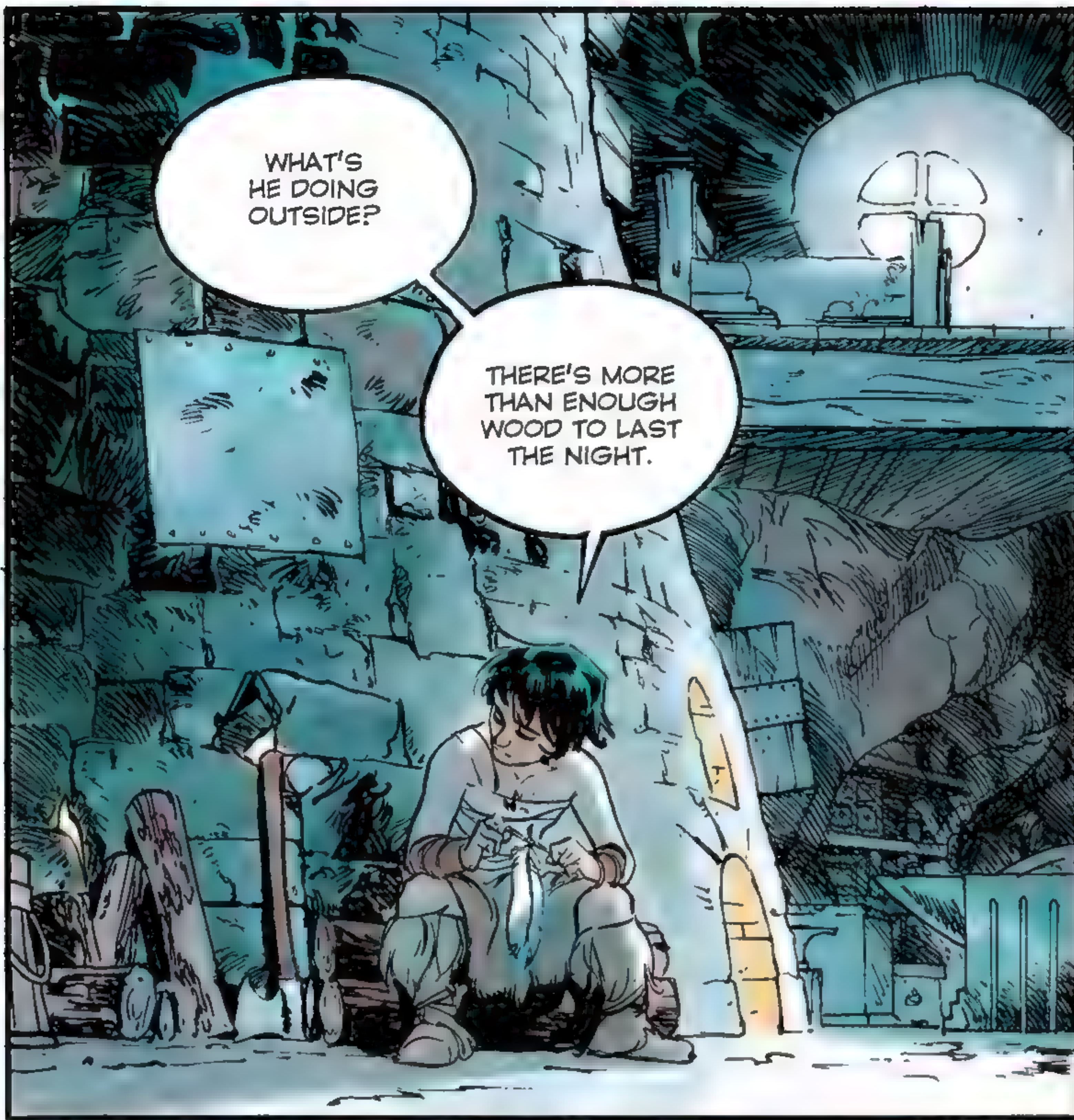


HE'LL  
SEE YO-

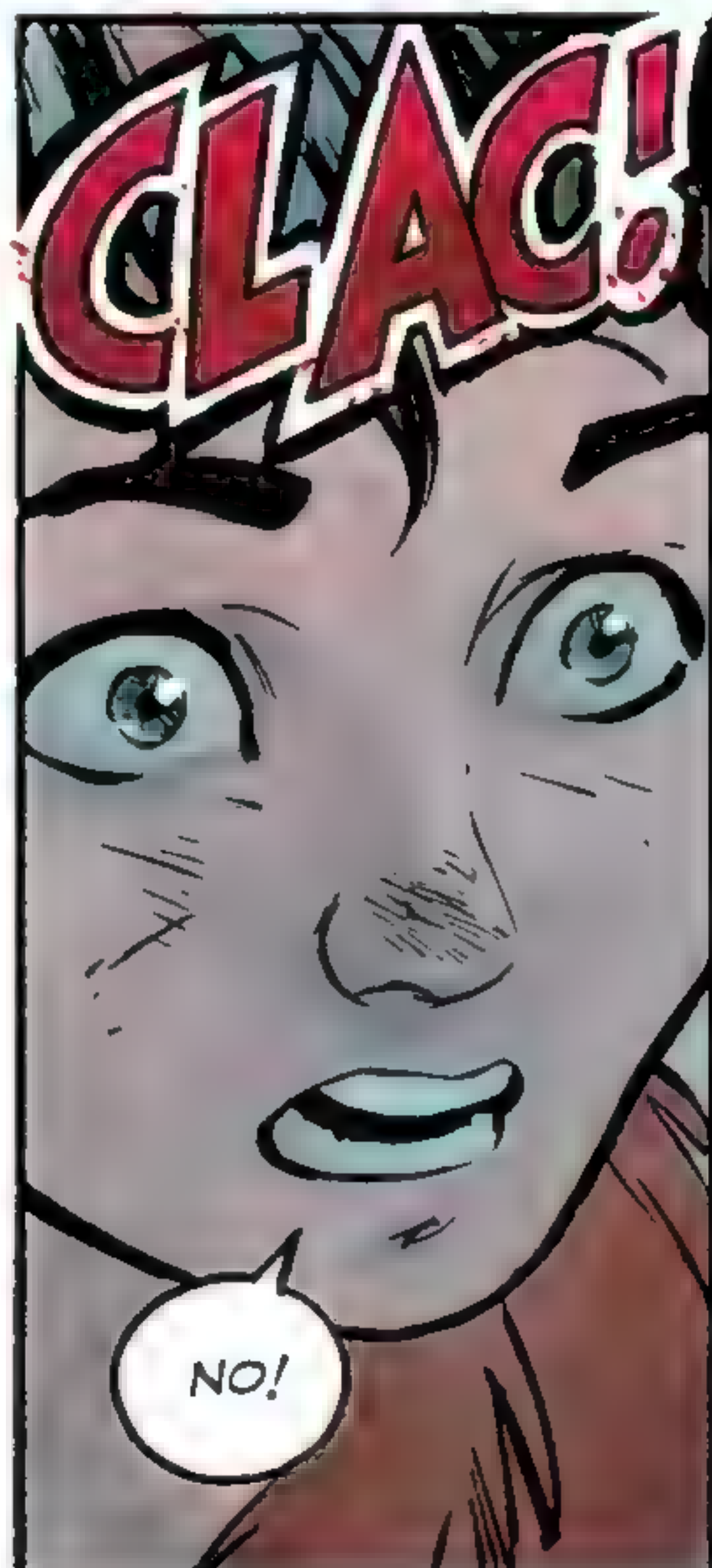
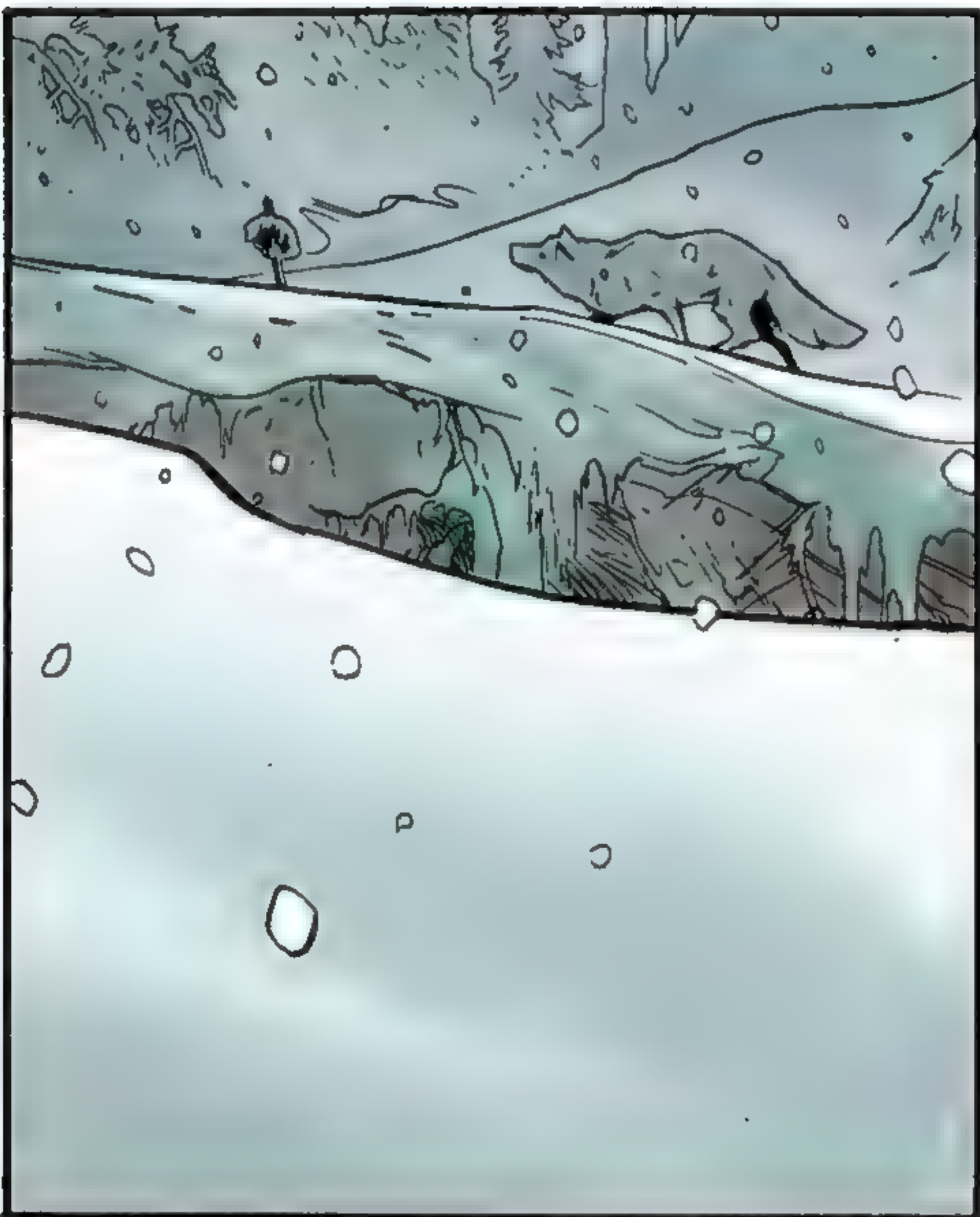
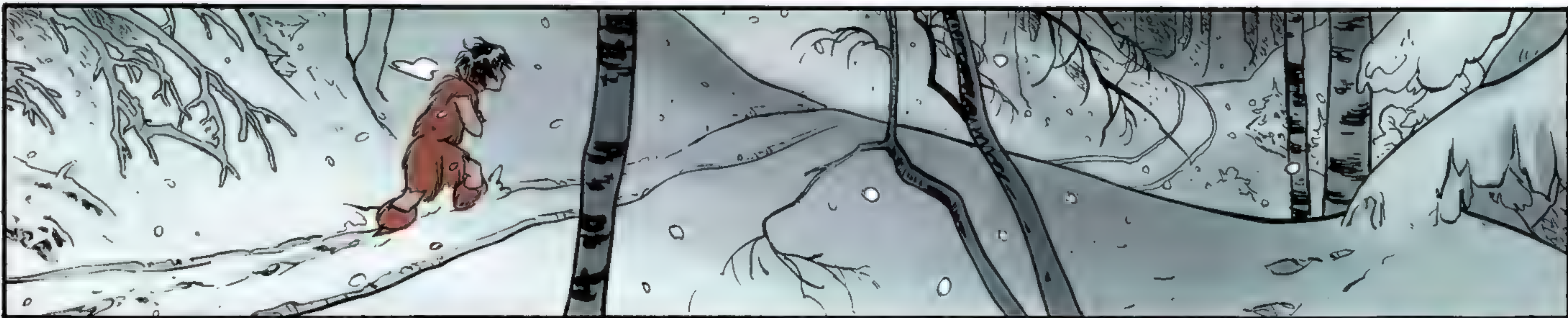
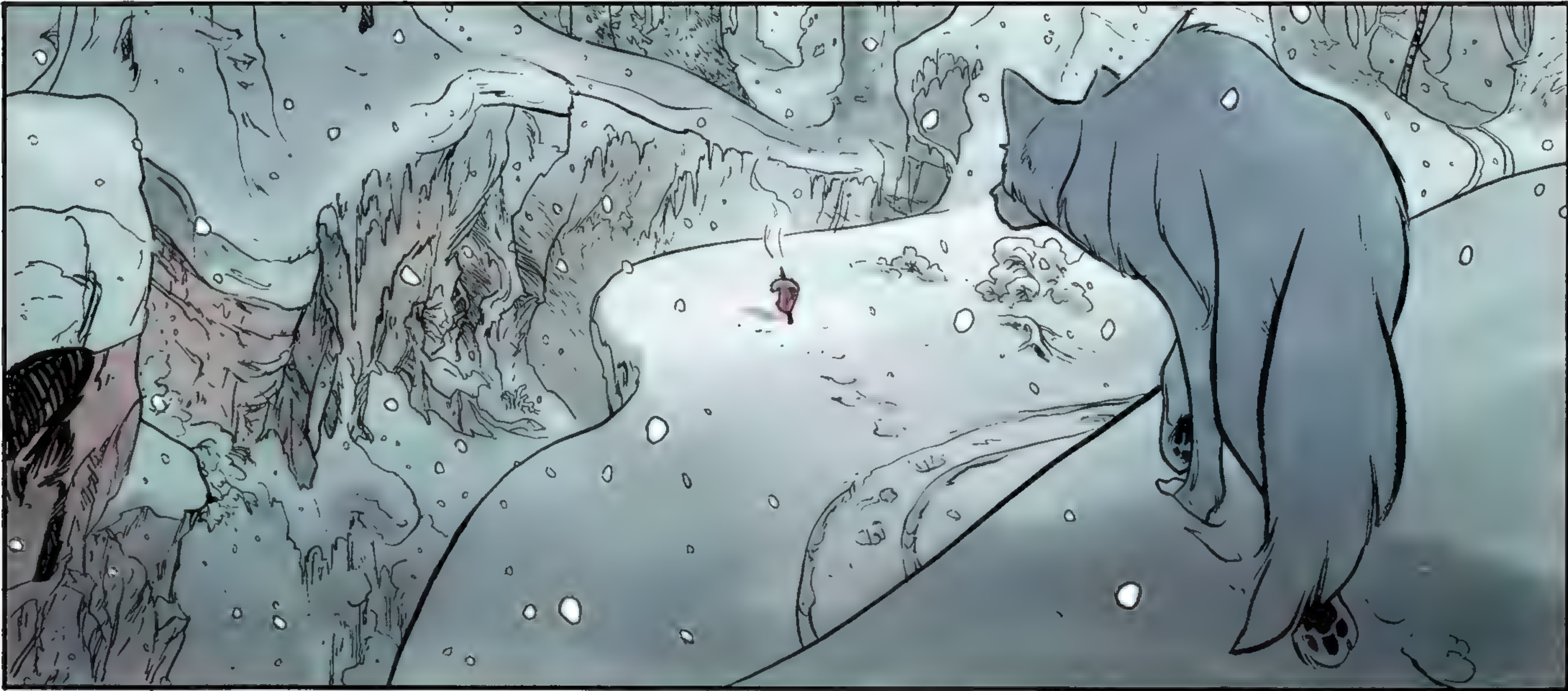
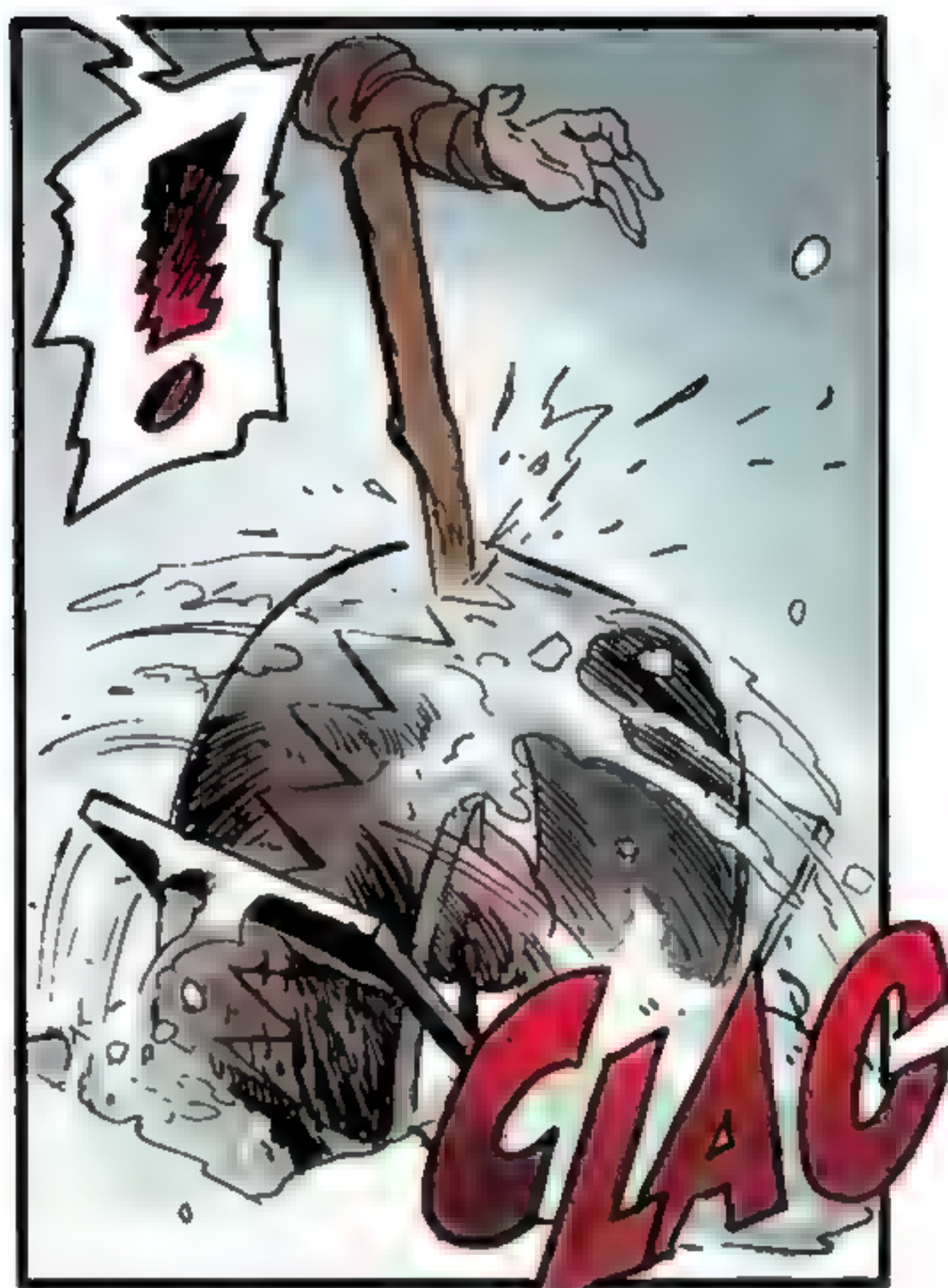
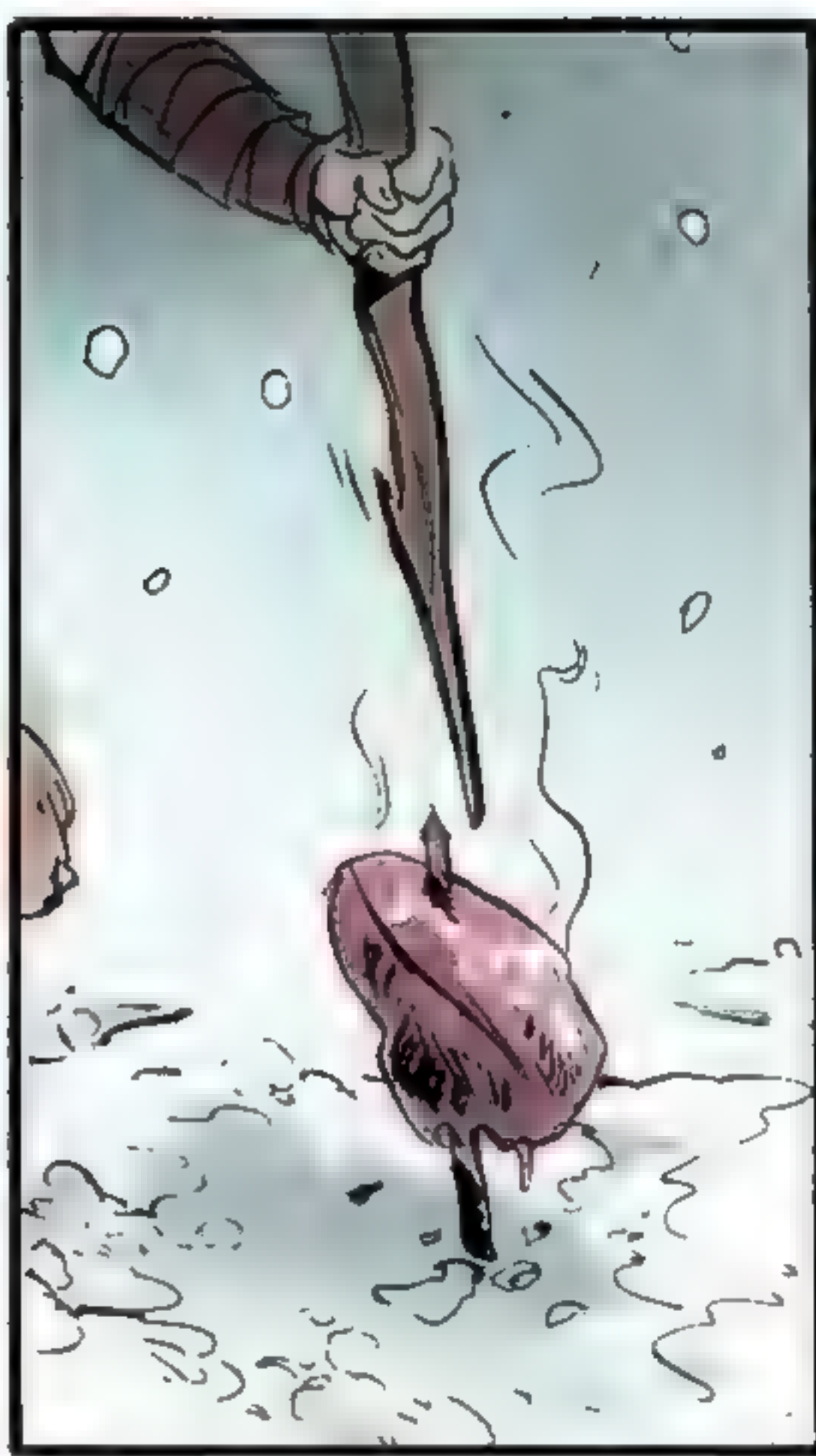
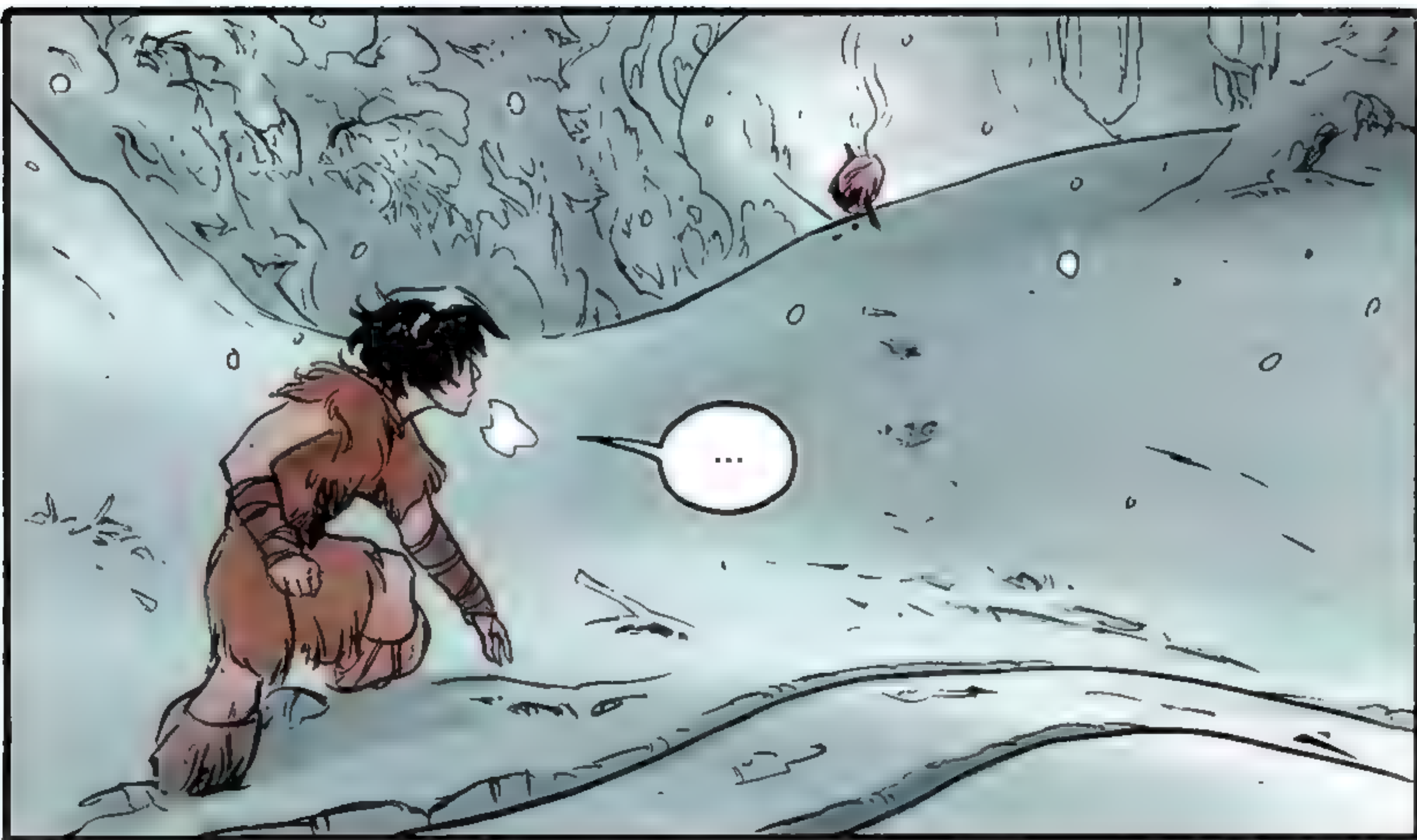




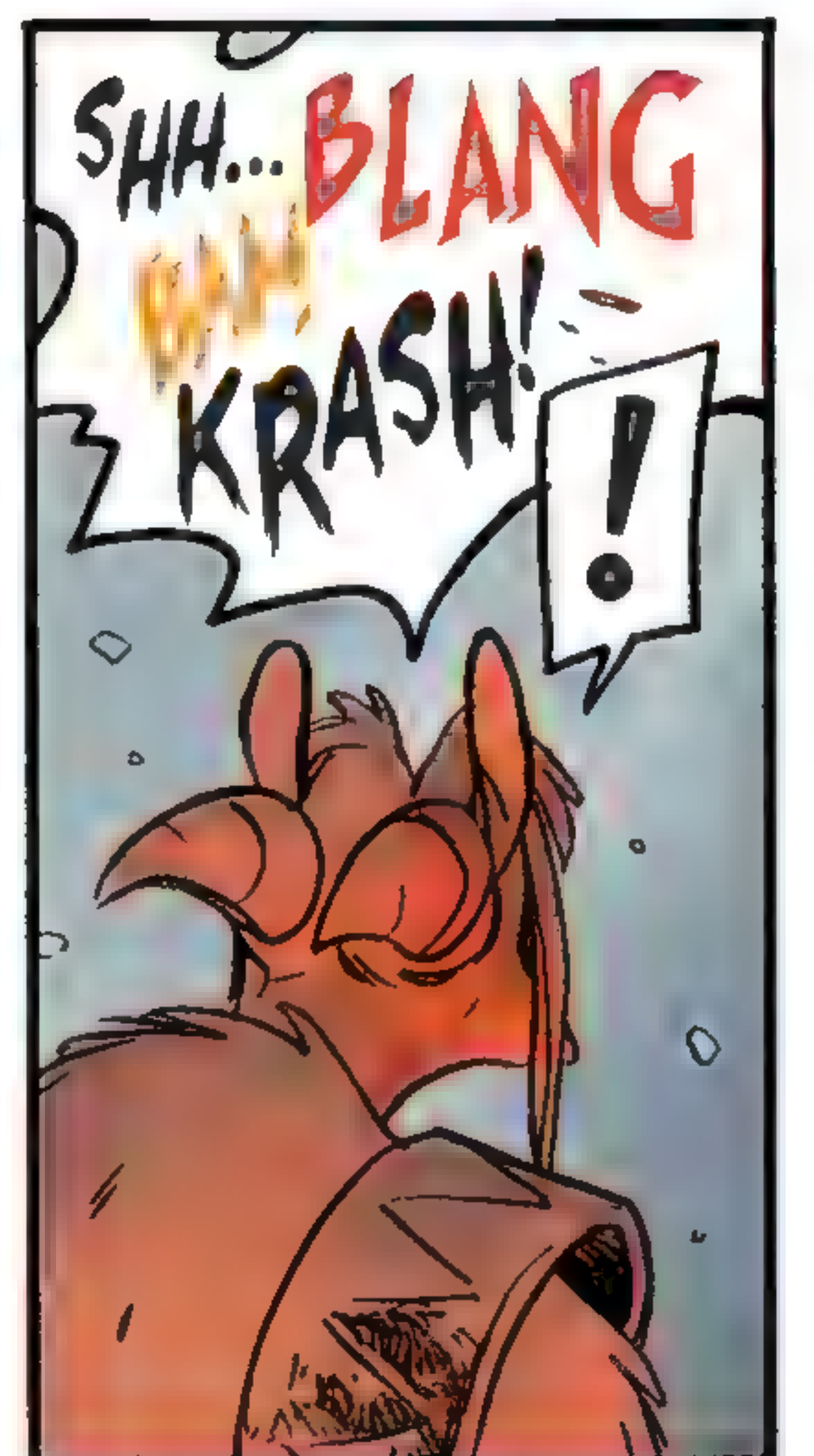
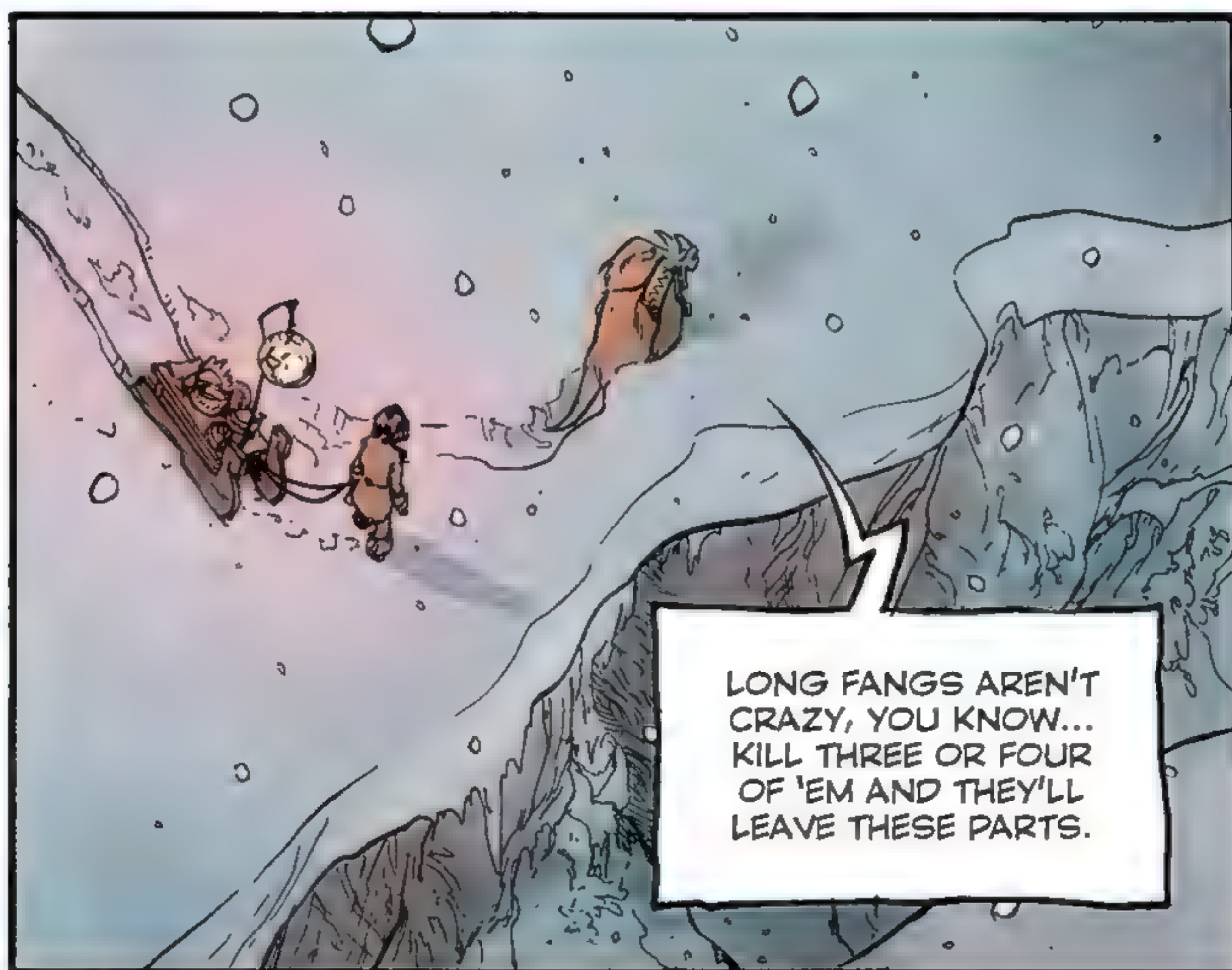
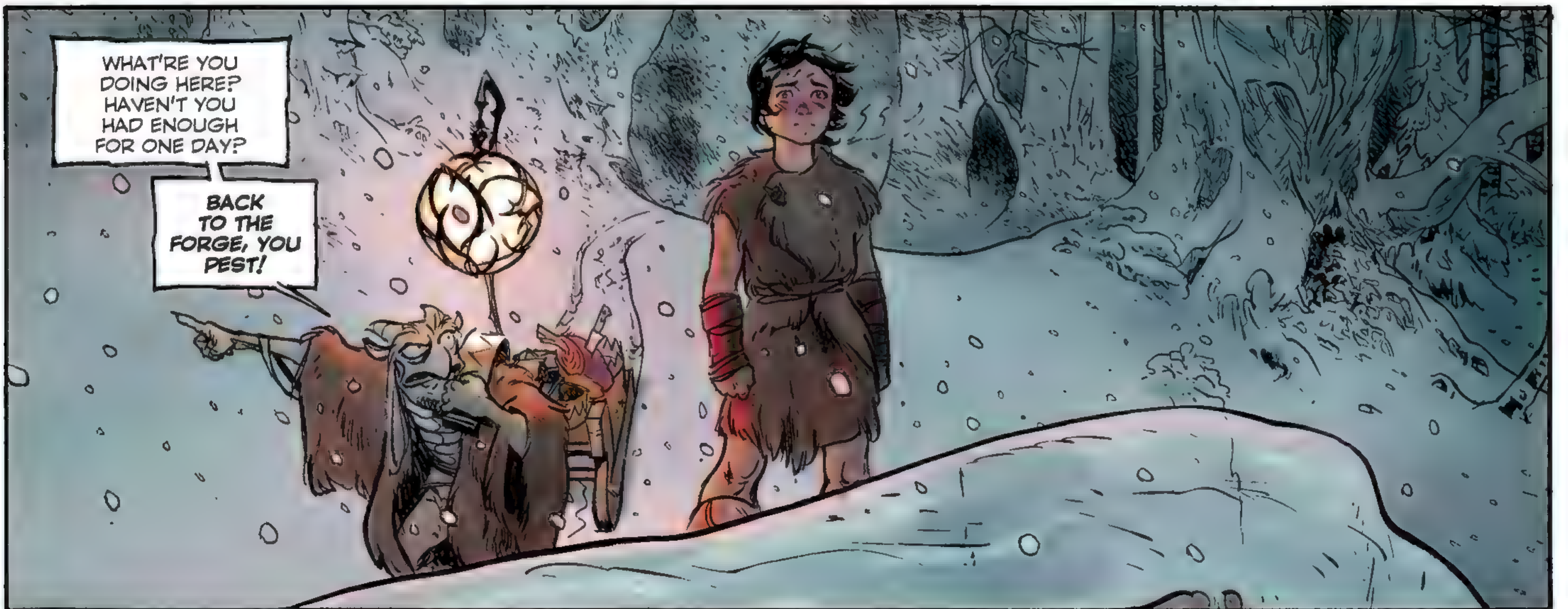
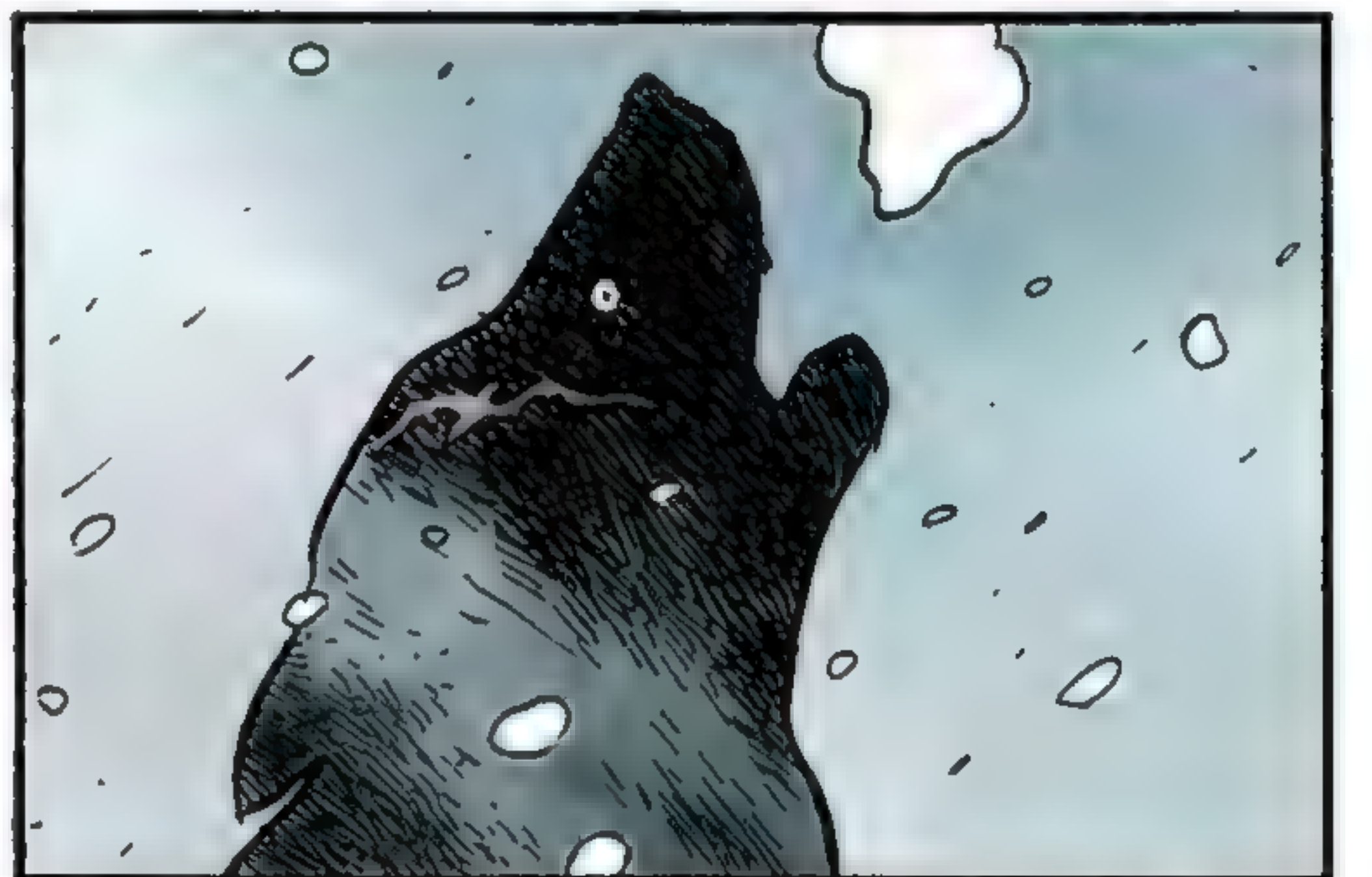
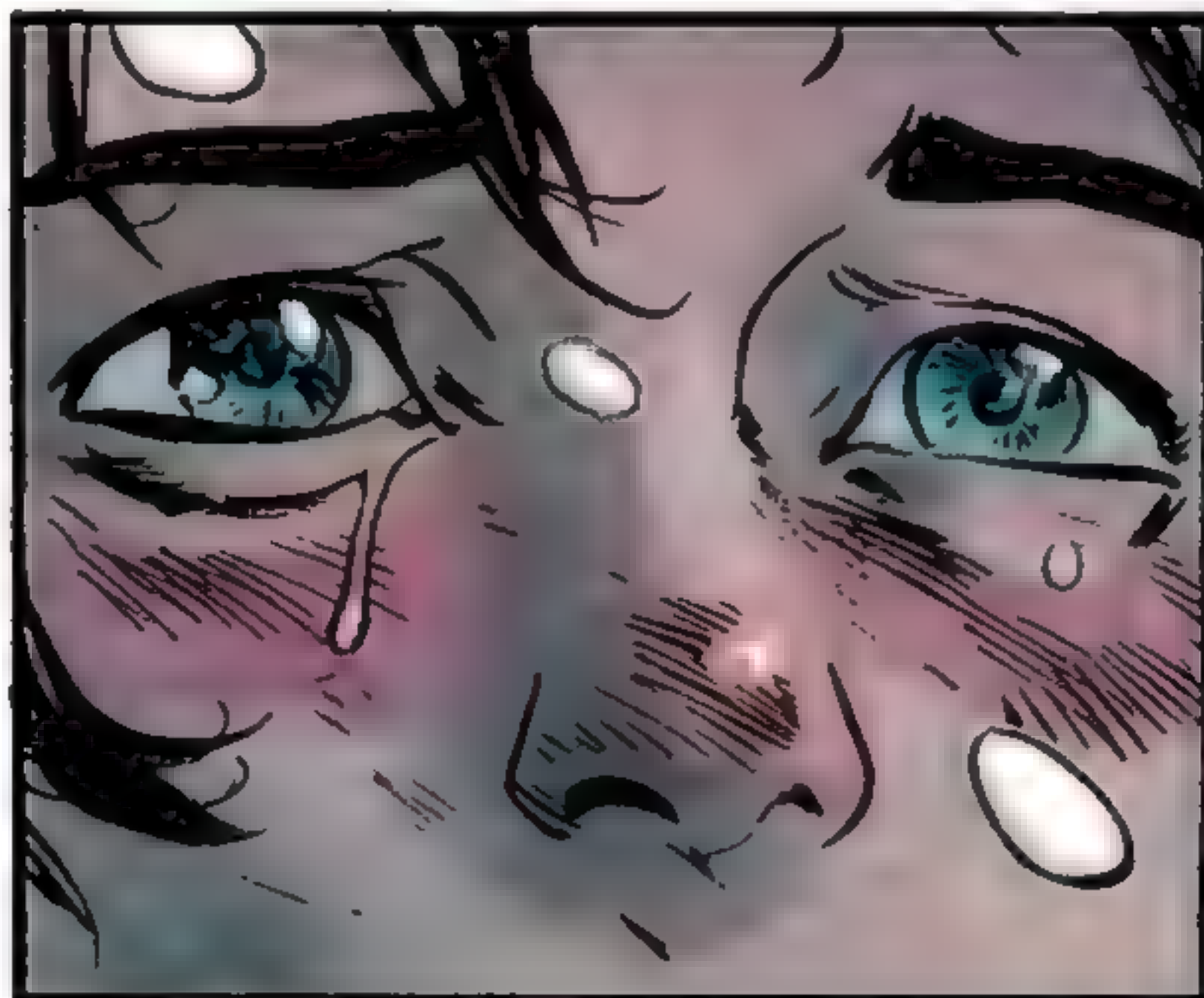
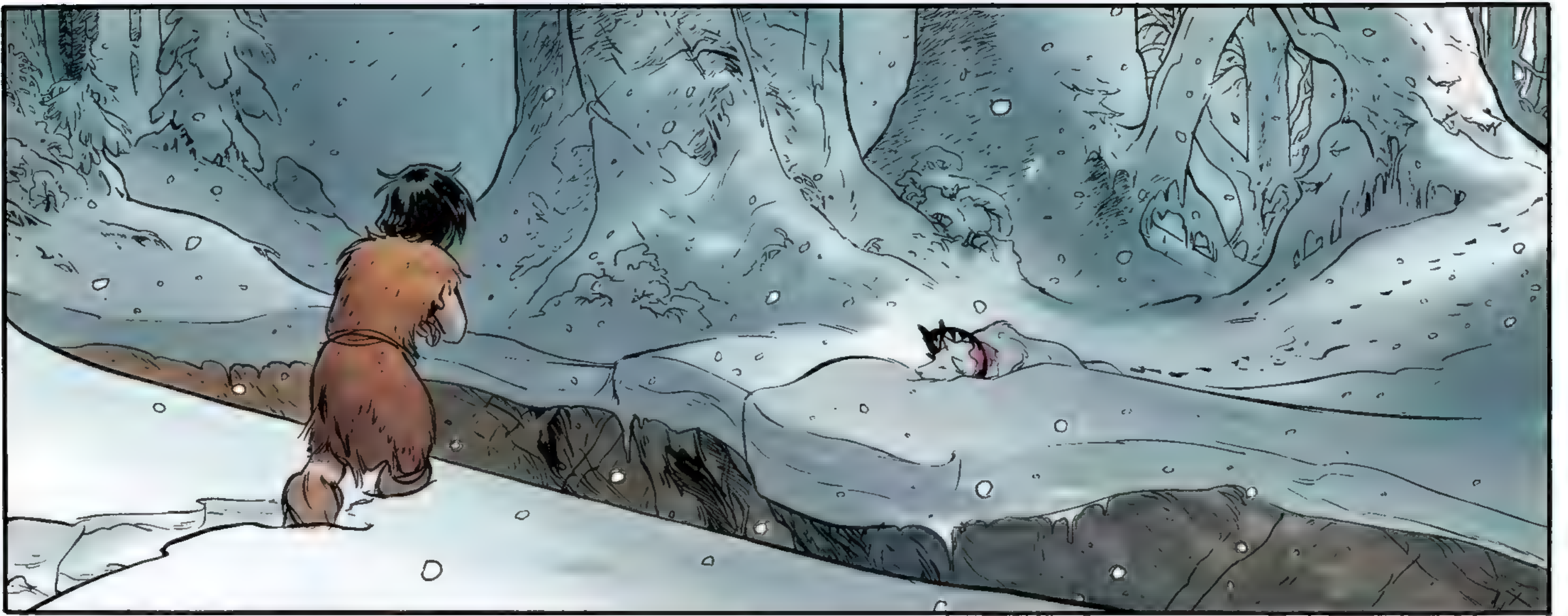




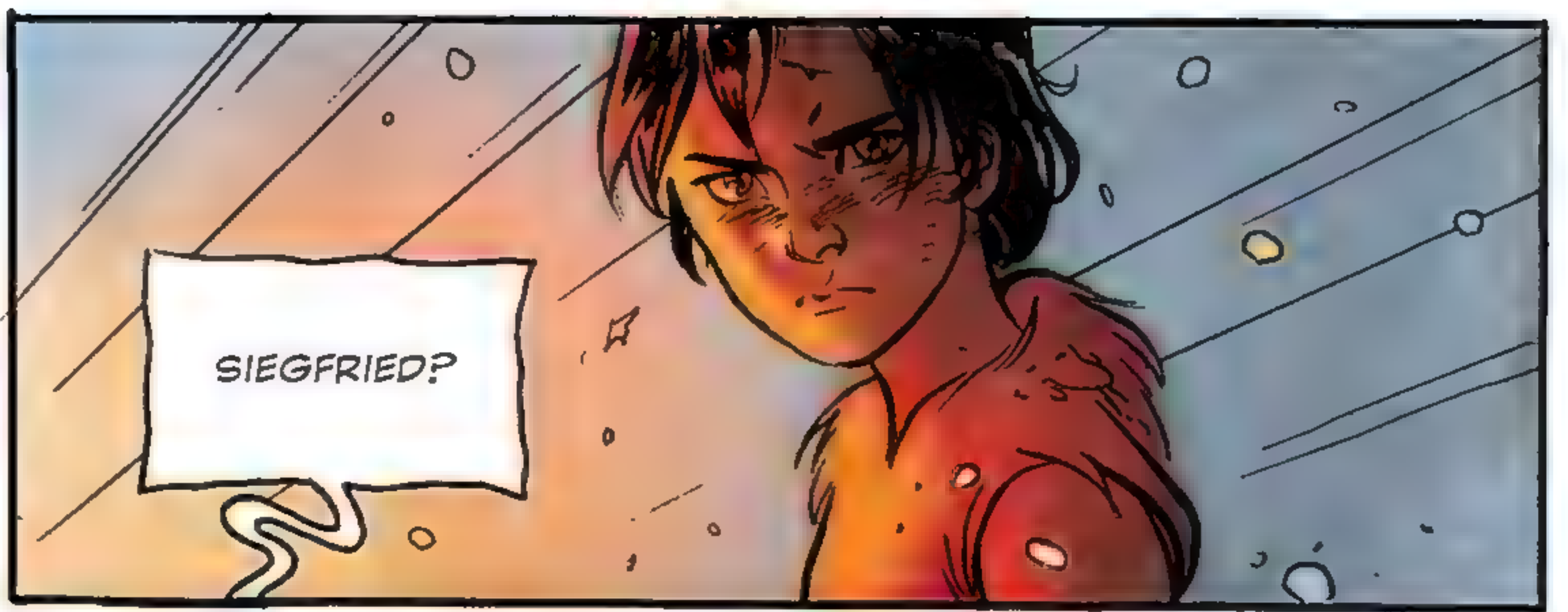




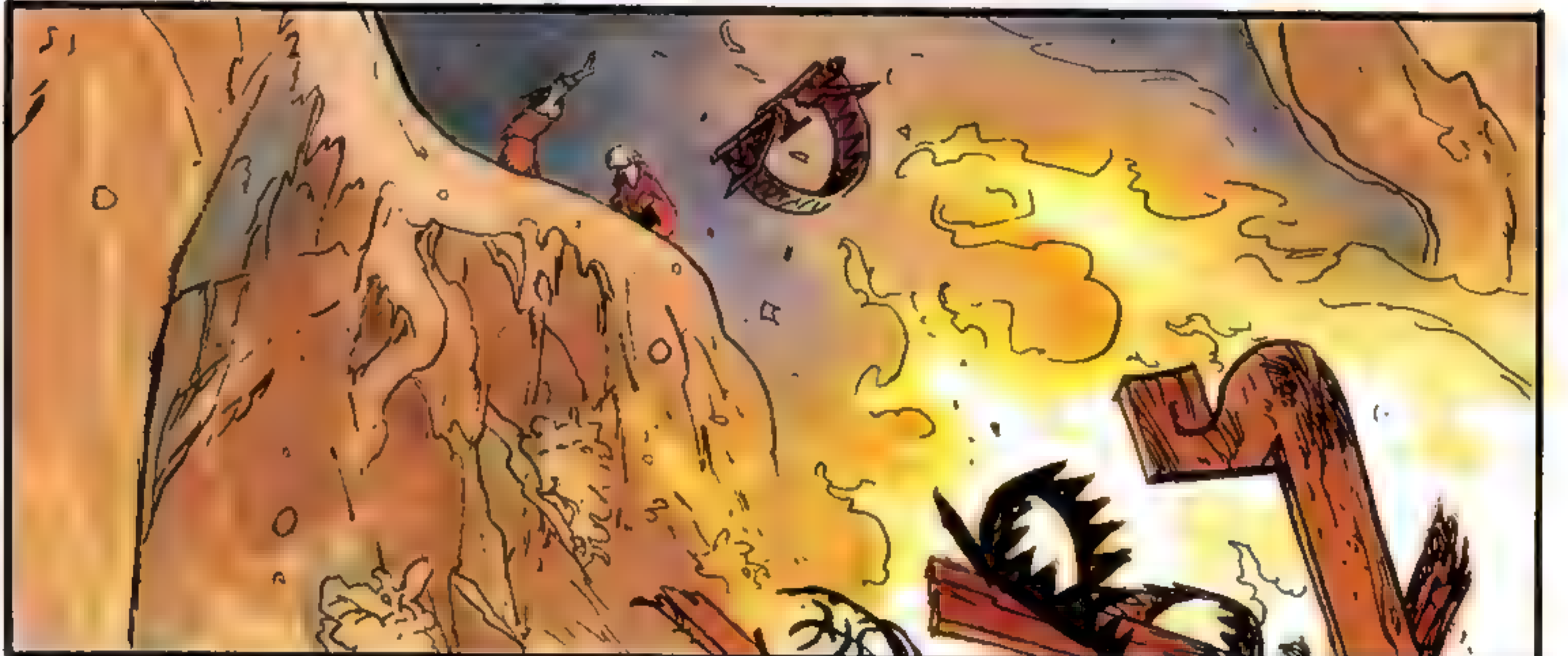
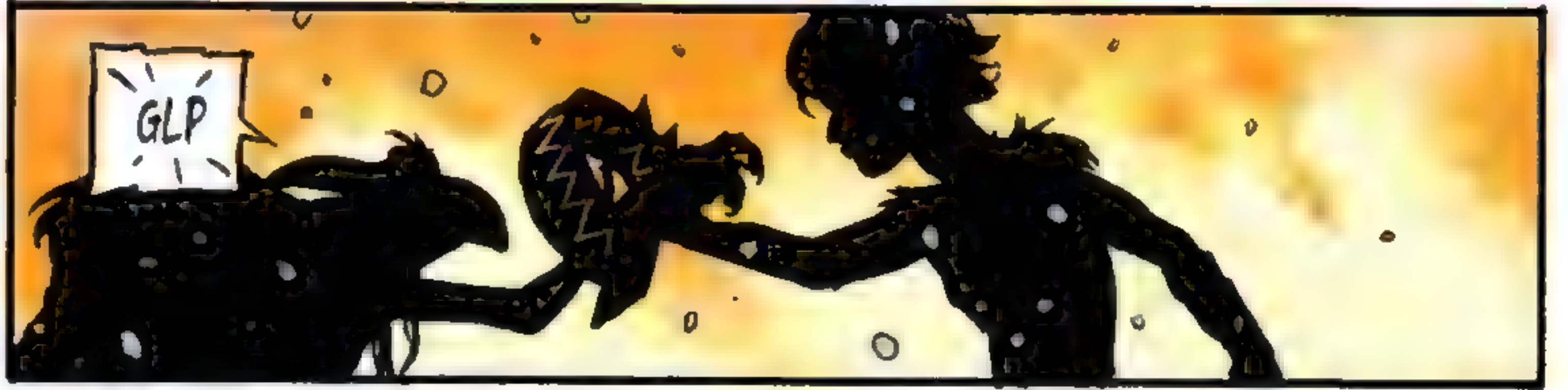








SIEGFRIED?



WHERE'RE YOU  
GONNA GO?  
YOU THINK  
SOMEONE  
ELSE'LL TAKE  
YOU IN?

YOU THINK THE WITCH  
ACROSS THE CLEARING  
WILL MAKE YOU UP A BED?

MIME'S ALL  
YOU'VE GOT!  
EVEN YOUR PARENTS  
ABANDONED YOU!

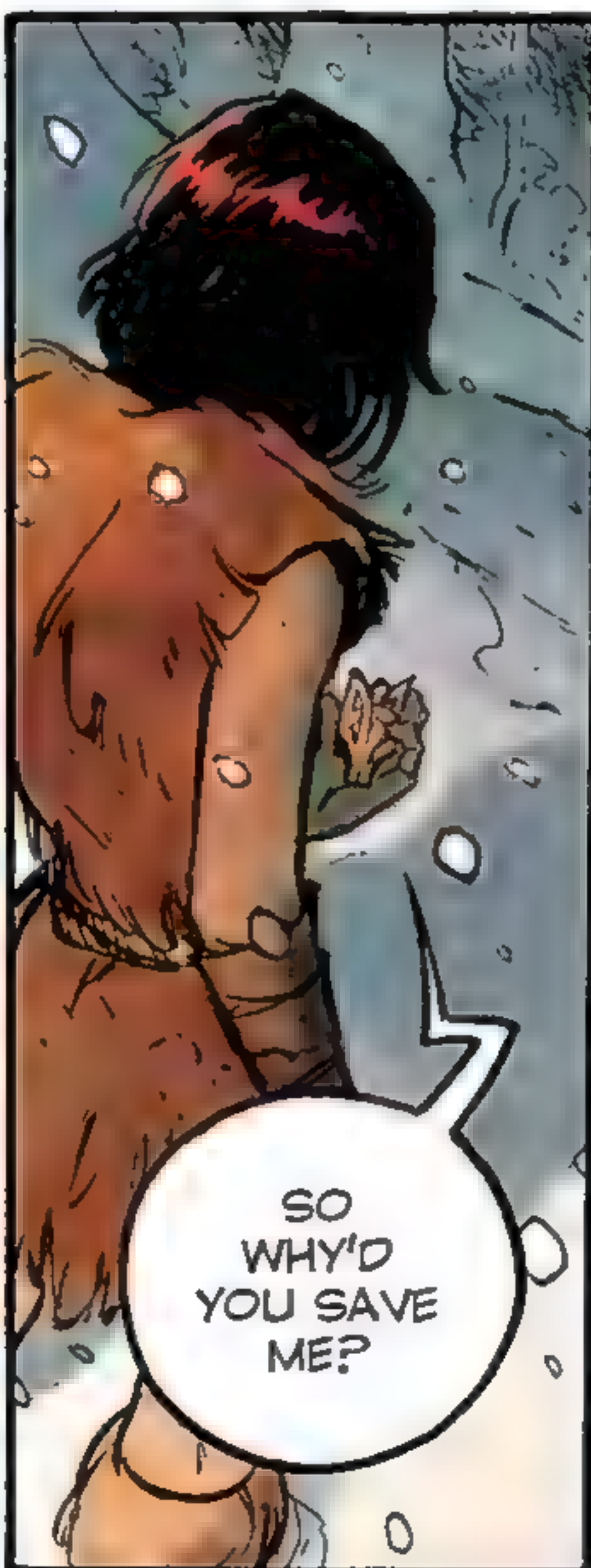


YOU  
DON'T  
KNOW  
THAT!

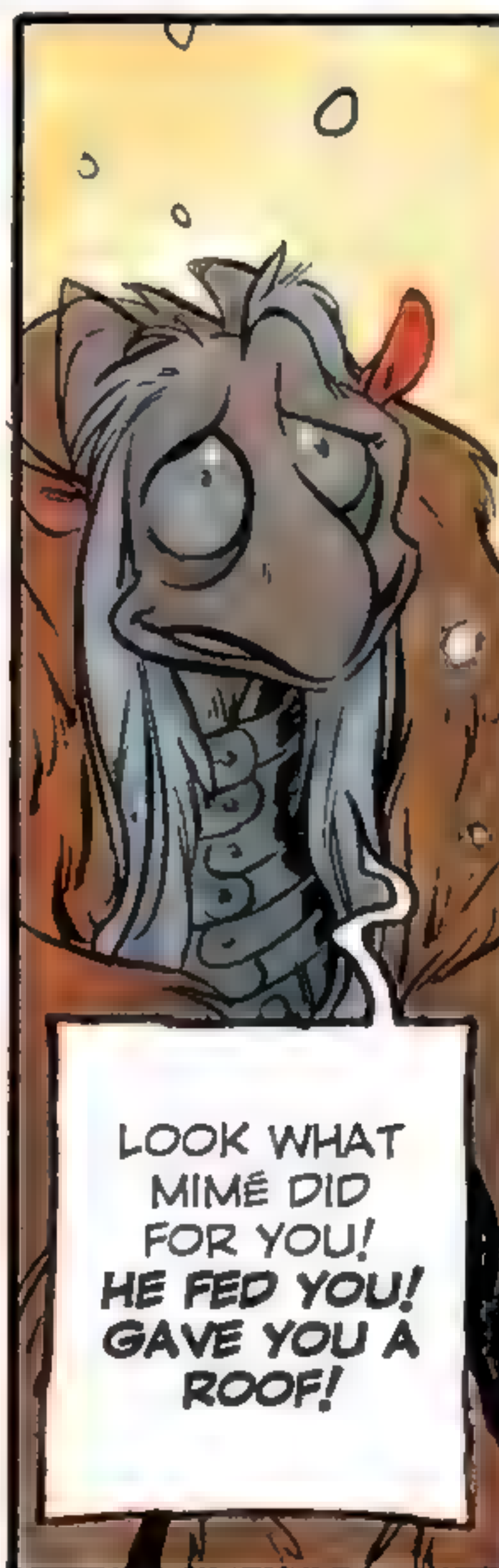


IF THEY REALLY  
CARED, THEY'D  
HAVE LEFT YOU  
MORE THAN THAT  
UGLY BROOCH.

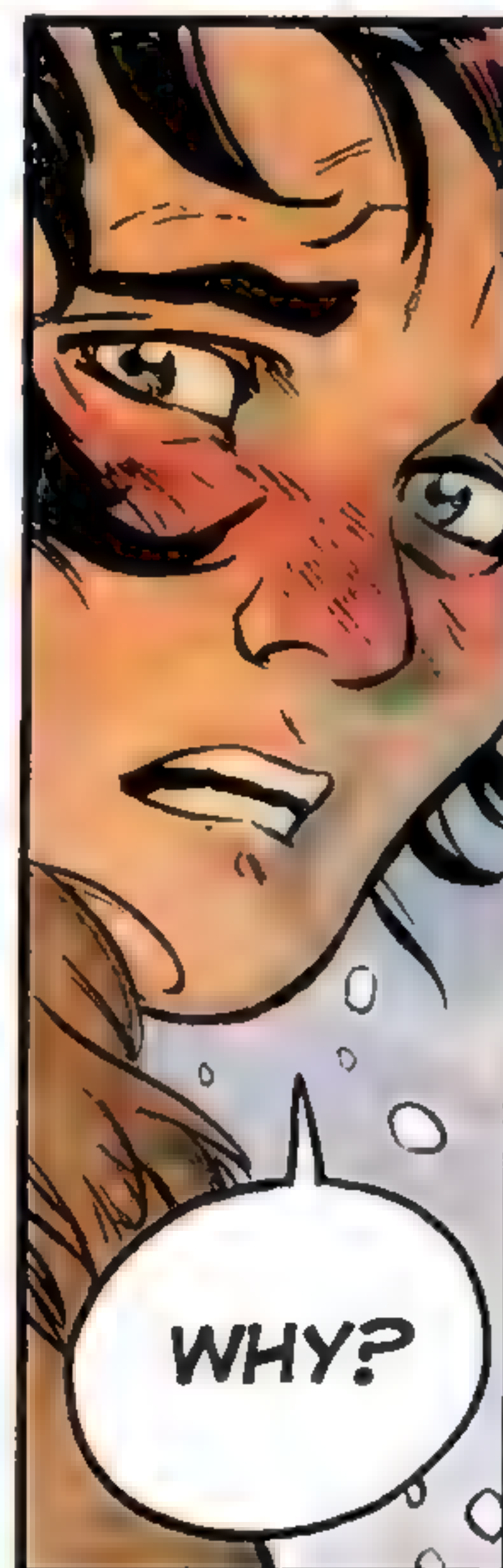
I MEAN, LOOK  
AT YOU! SMALL,  
PINK-SKINNED!  
NO HORNS OR FUR!  
WHO COULD  
WANT YOU?



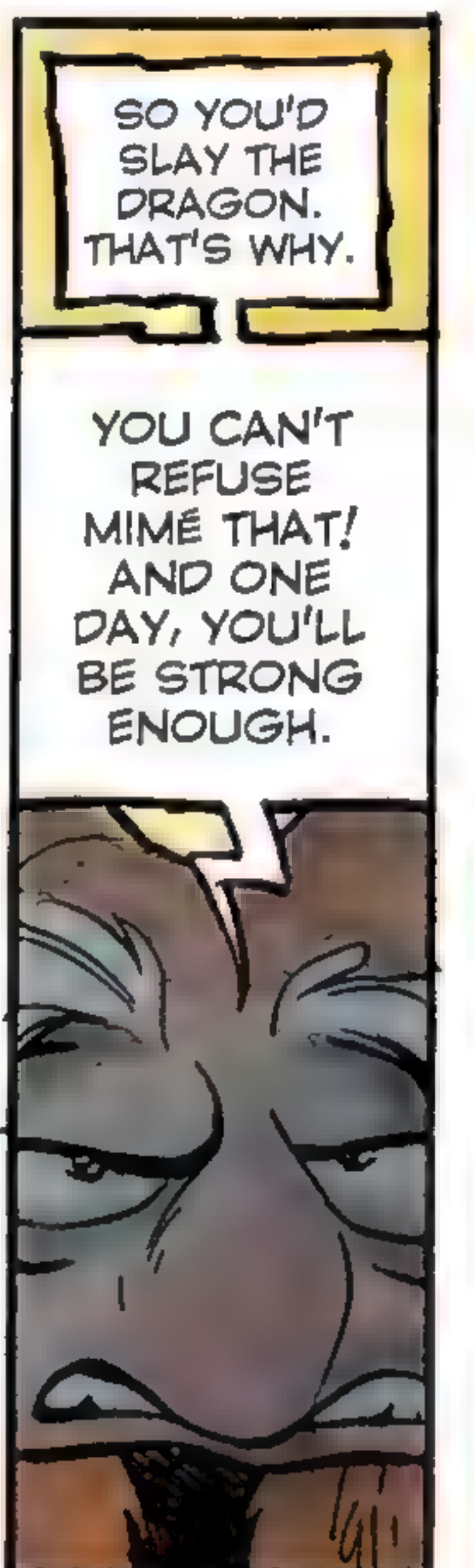
SO  
WHY'D  
YOU SAVE  
ME?



LOOK WHAT  
MIME DID  
FOR YOU!  
HE FED YOU!  
GAVE YOU A  
ROOF!



WHY?



SO YOU'D  
SLAY THE  
DRAGON.  
THAT'S WHY.

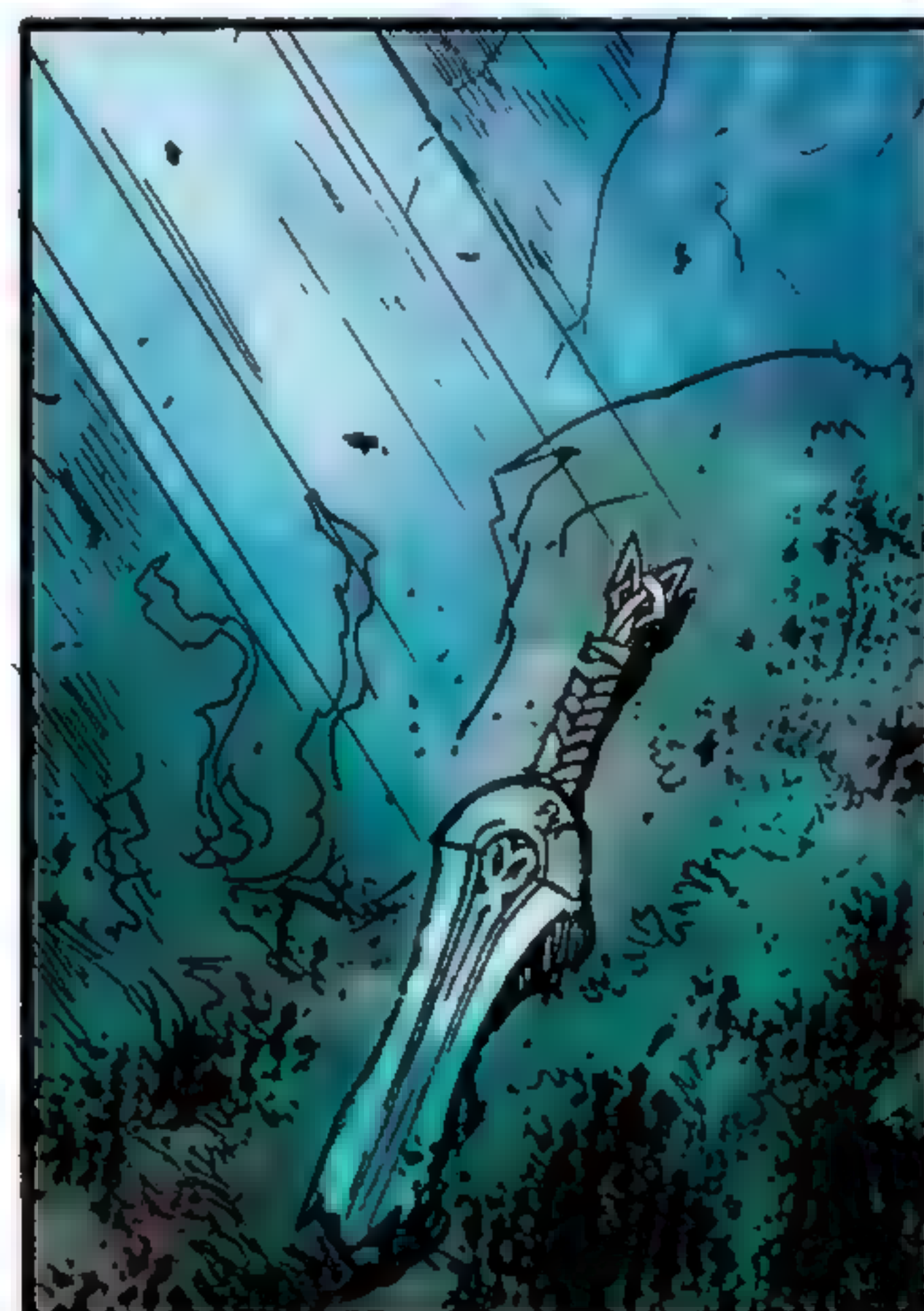
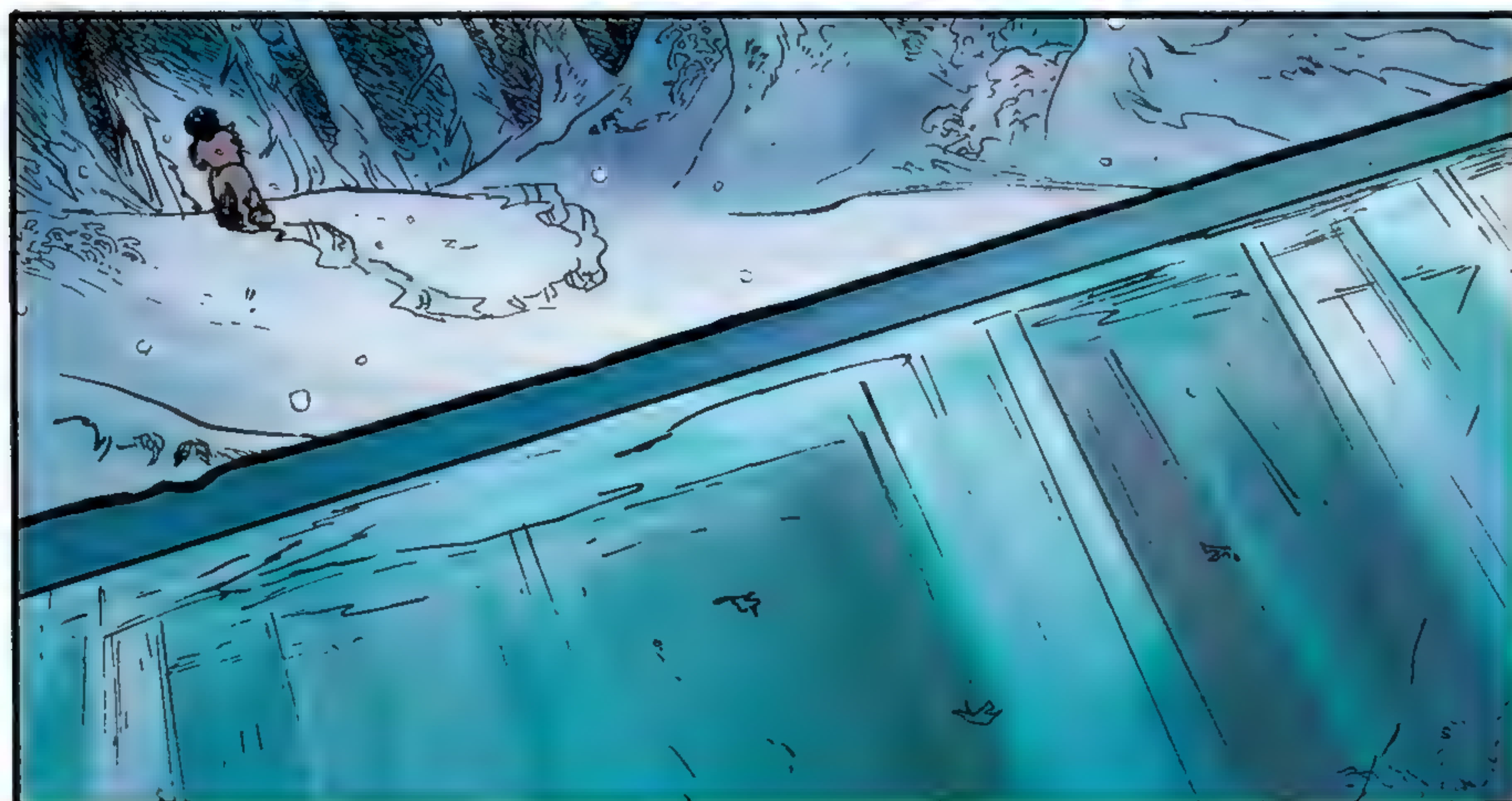
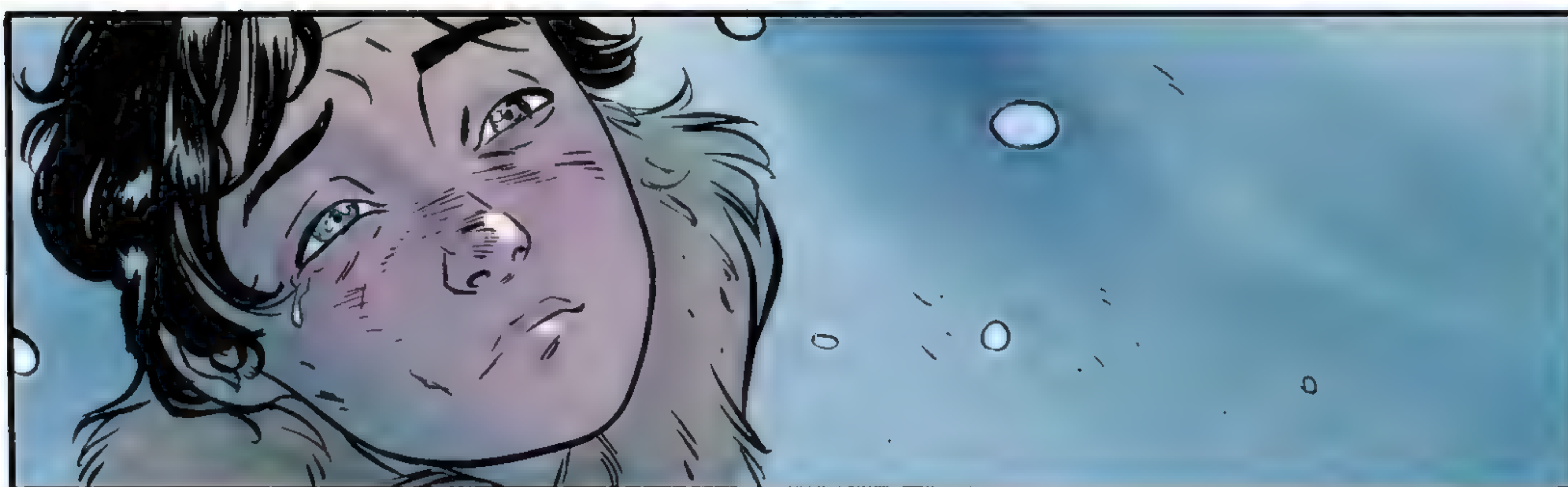
YOU CAN'T  
REFUSE  
MIME THAT!  
AND ONE  
DAY, YOU'LL  
BE STRONG  
ENOUGH.



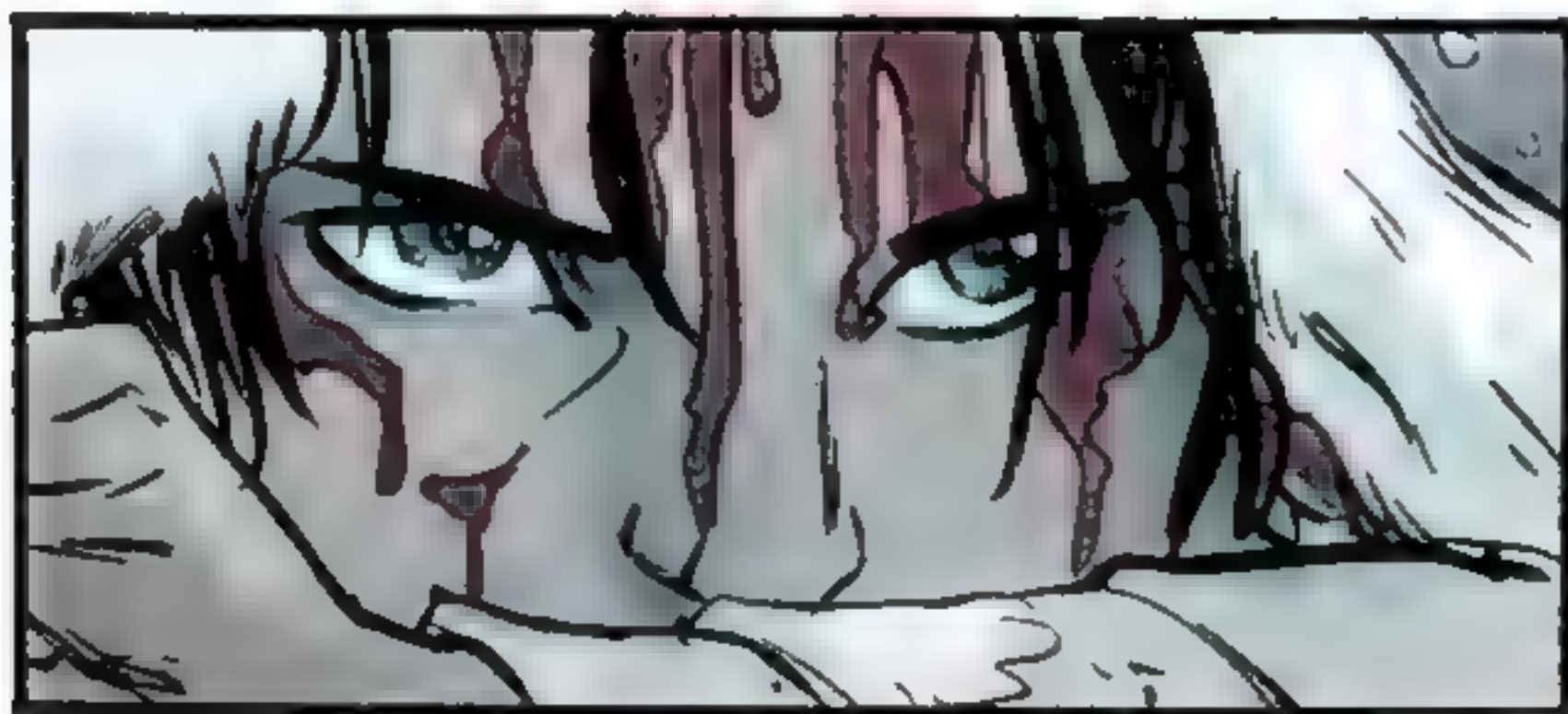
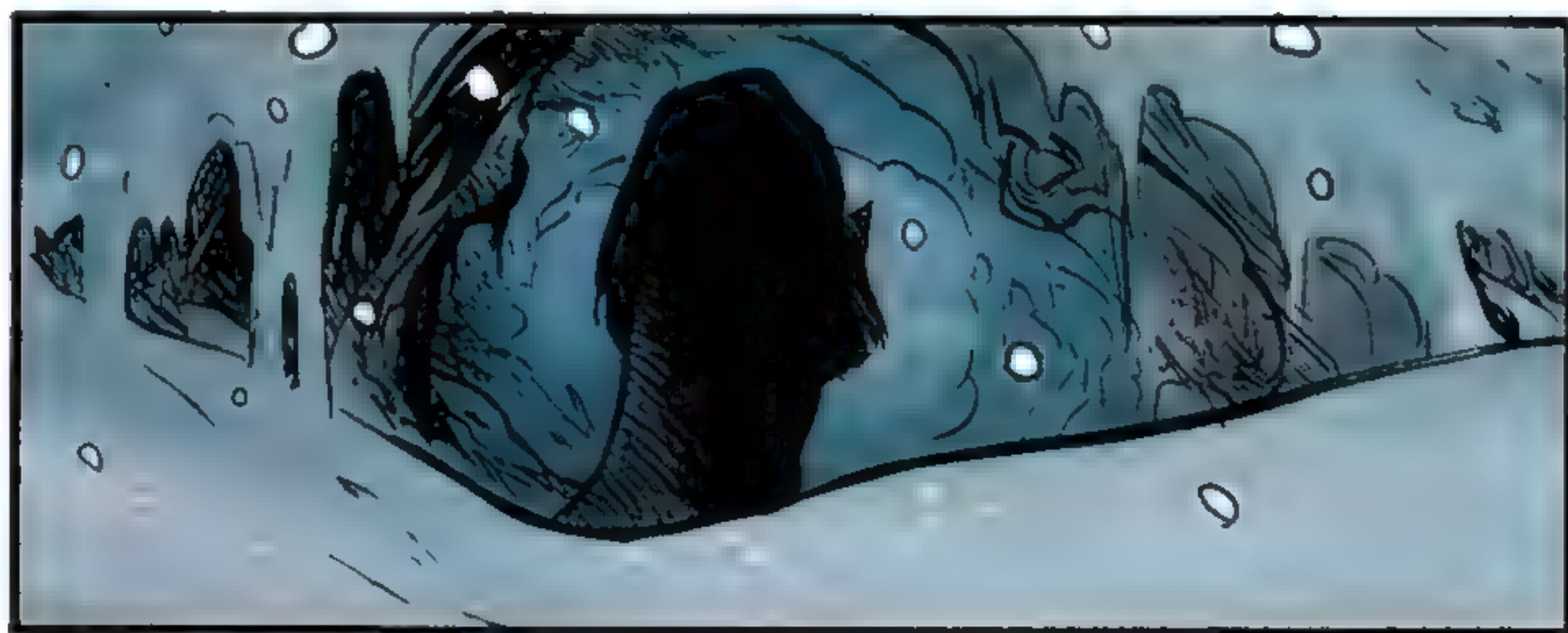
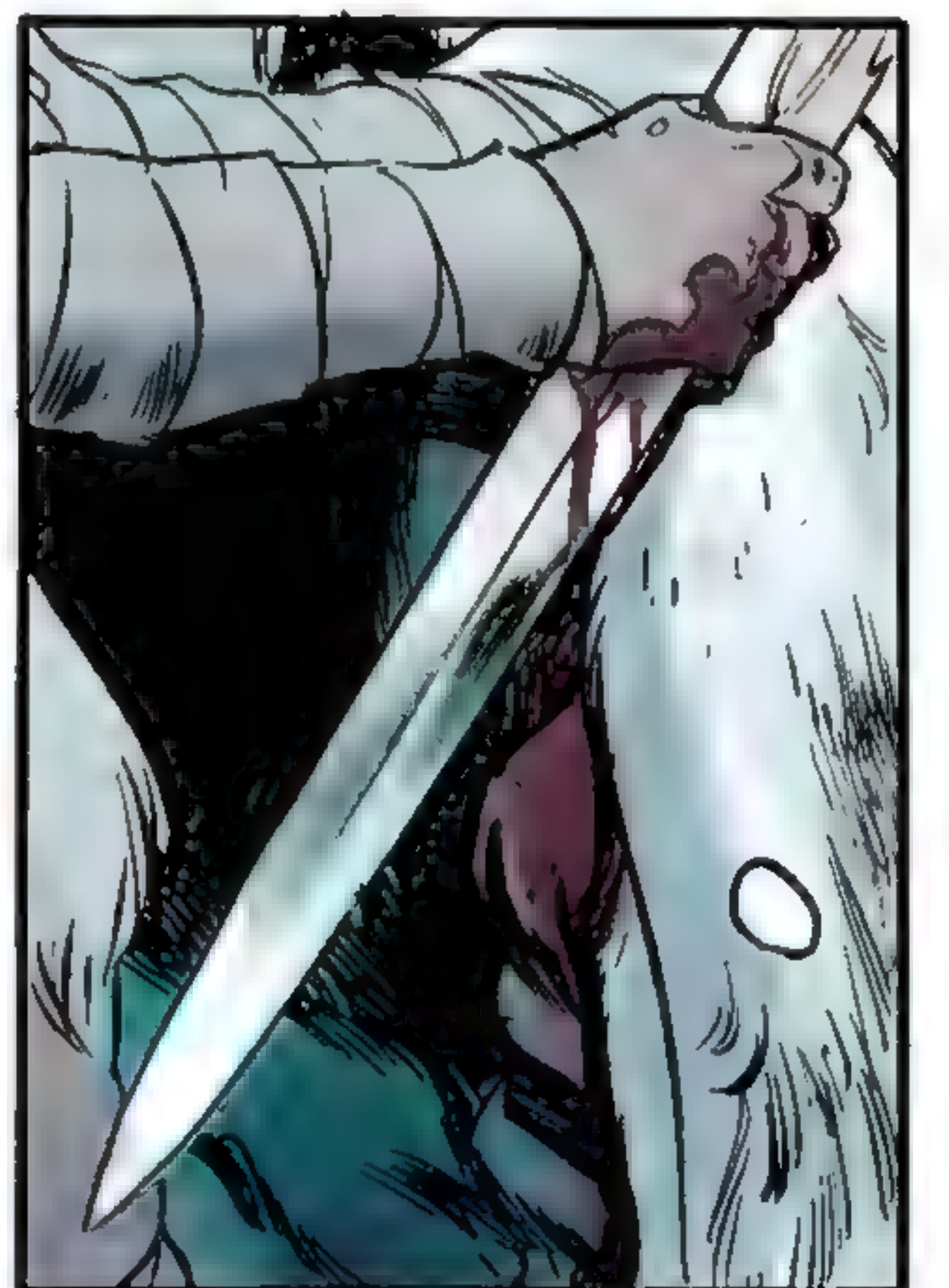
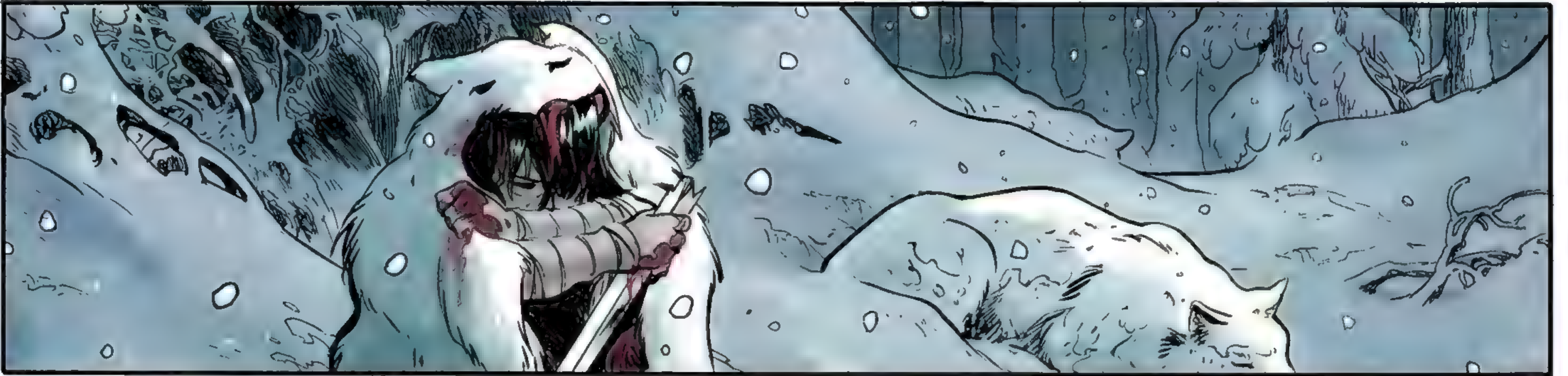
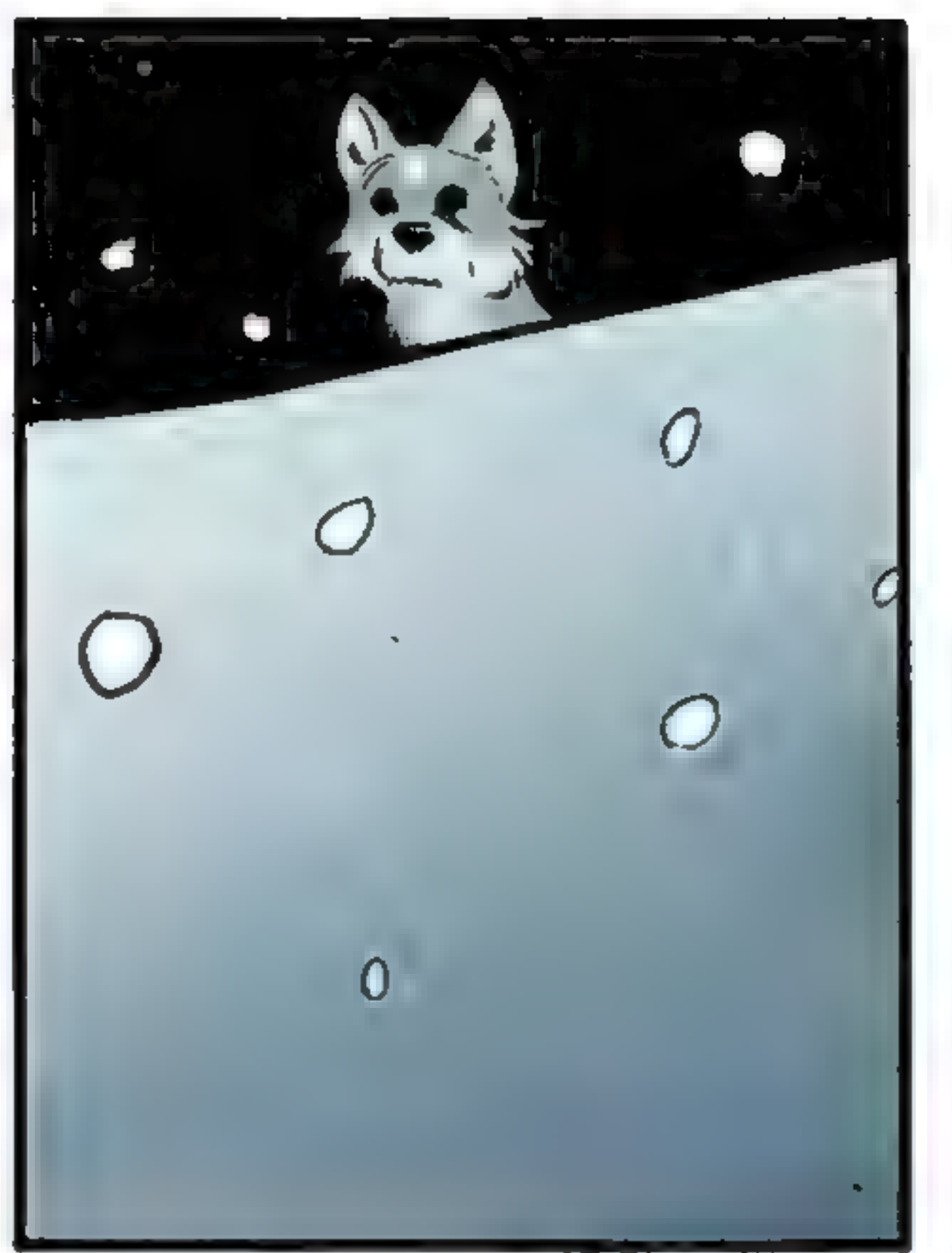
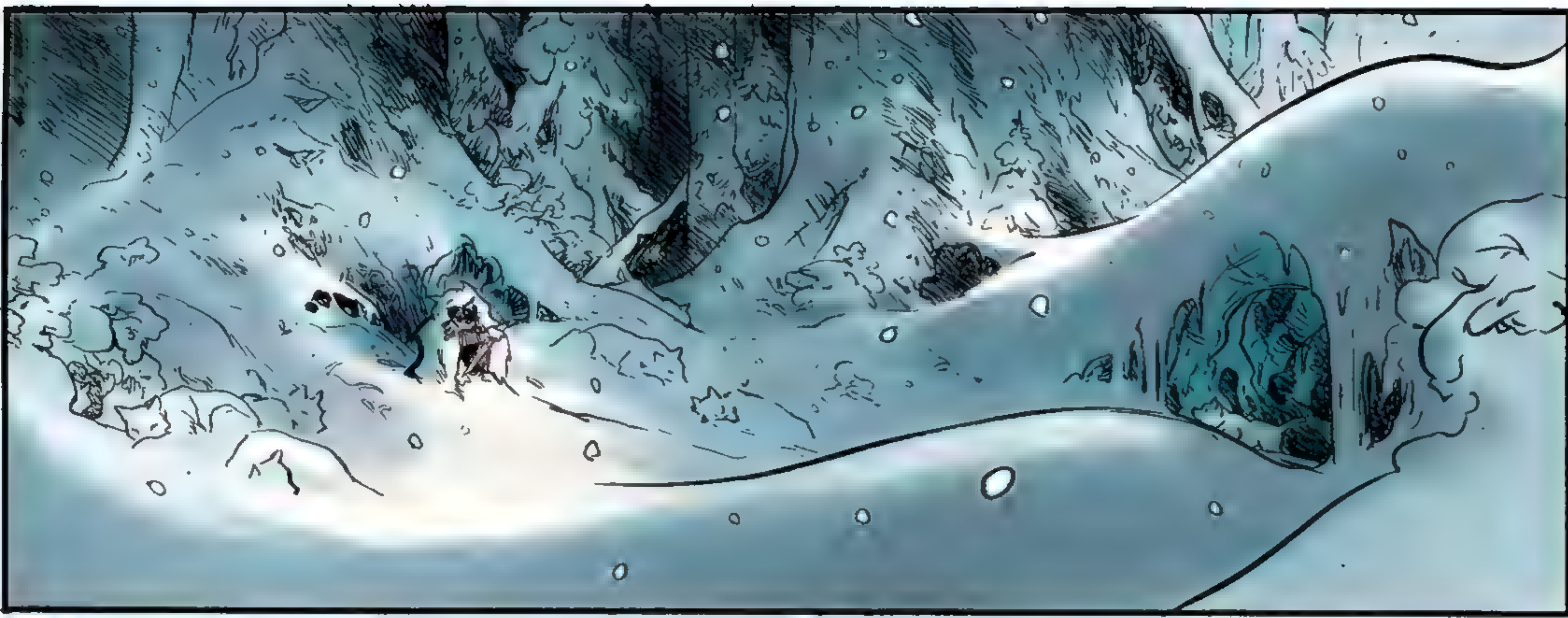
KILL IT  
YOURSELF!

SIEGFRIED!









TO BE CONTINUED



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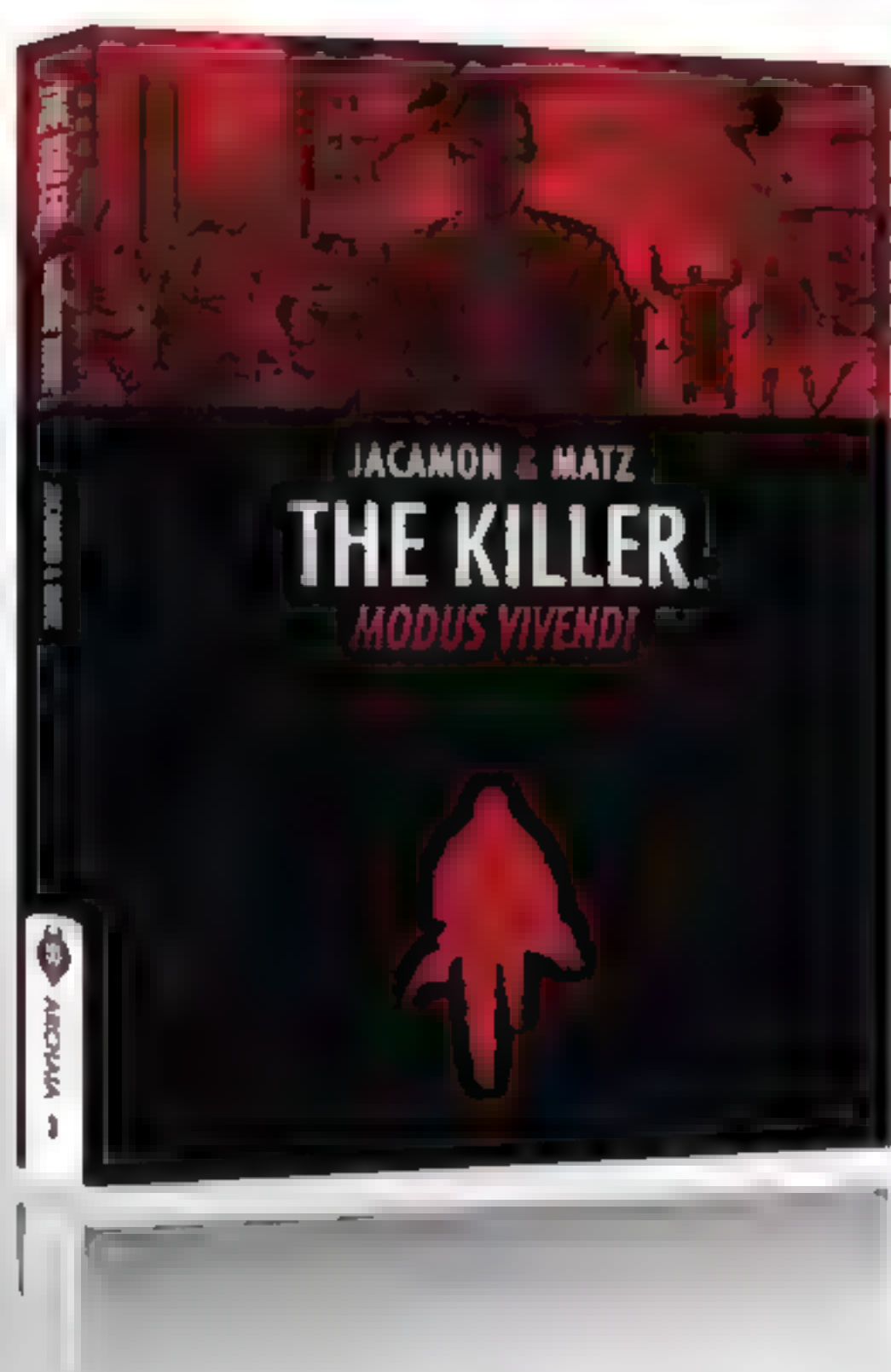
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ALEX ALICE

# SIEGFRIED



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02 | PART TWO



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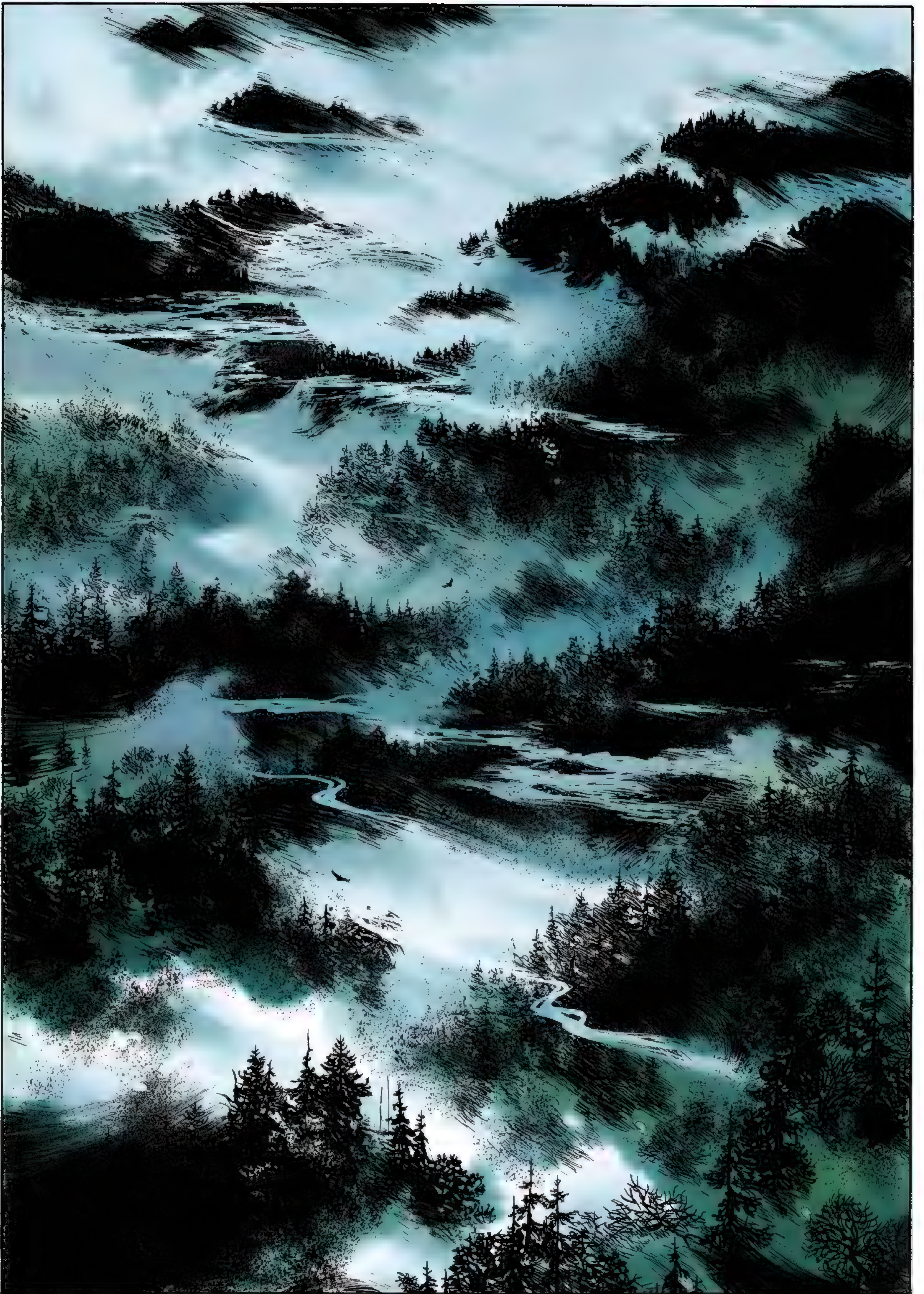
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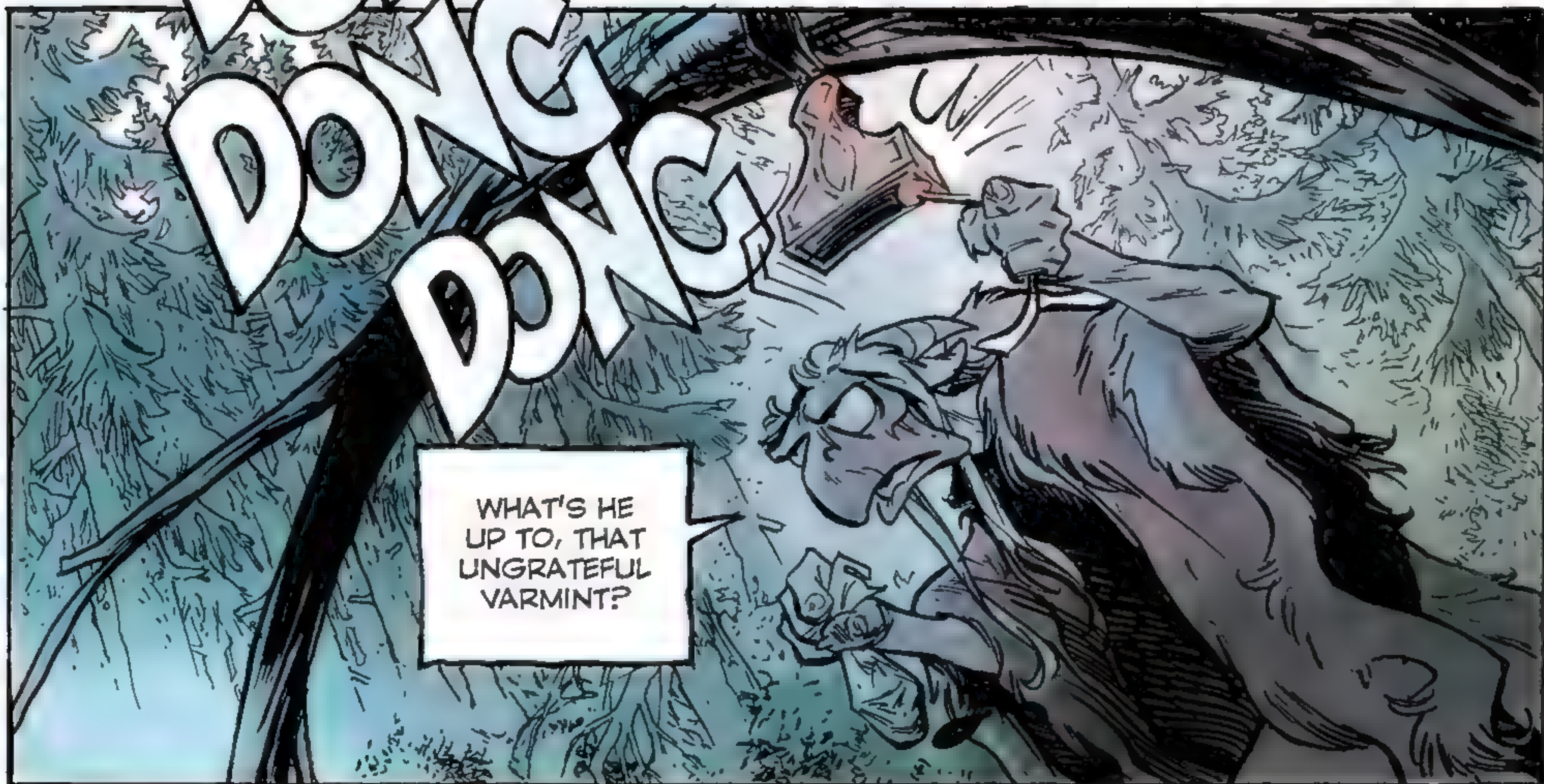
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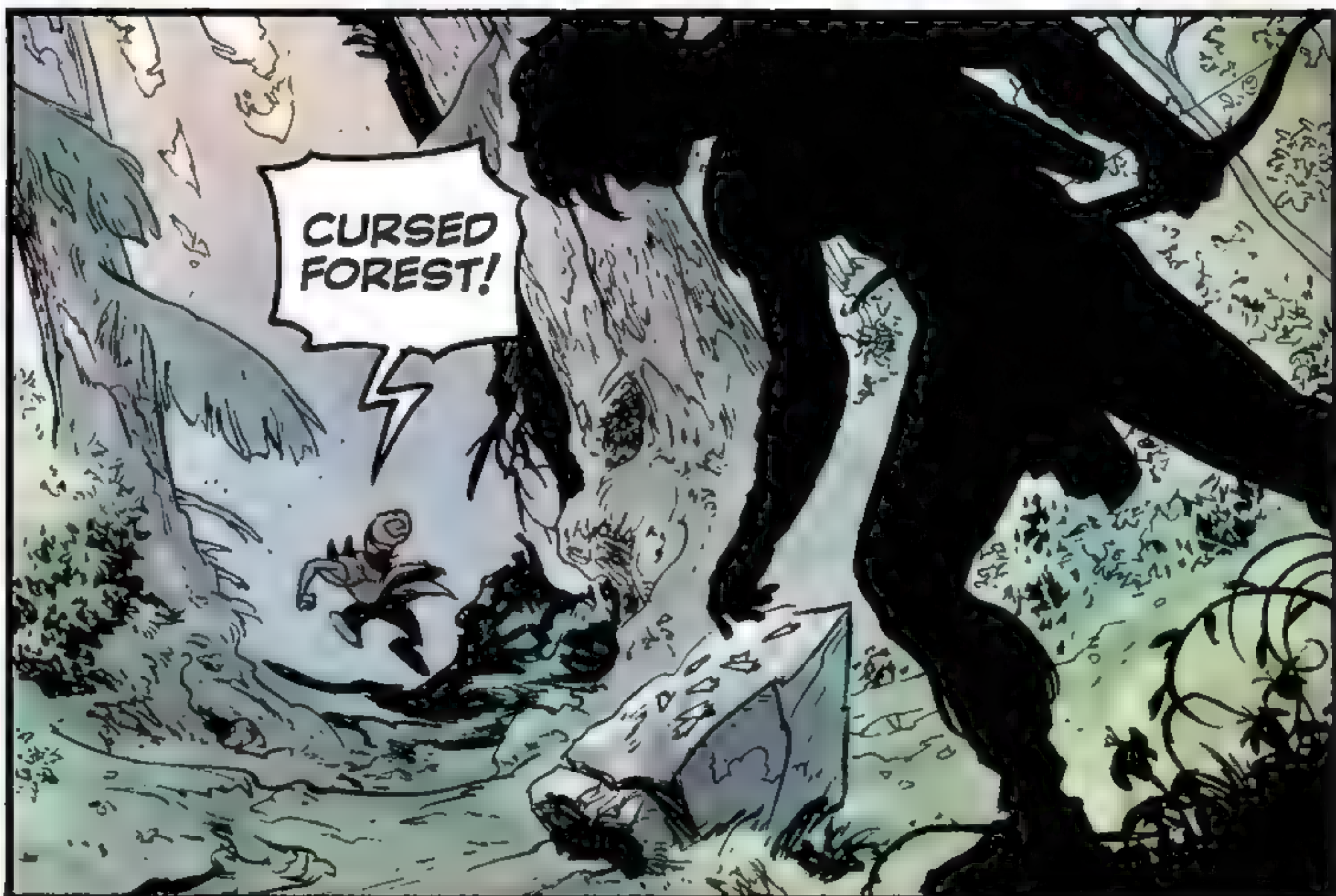
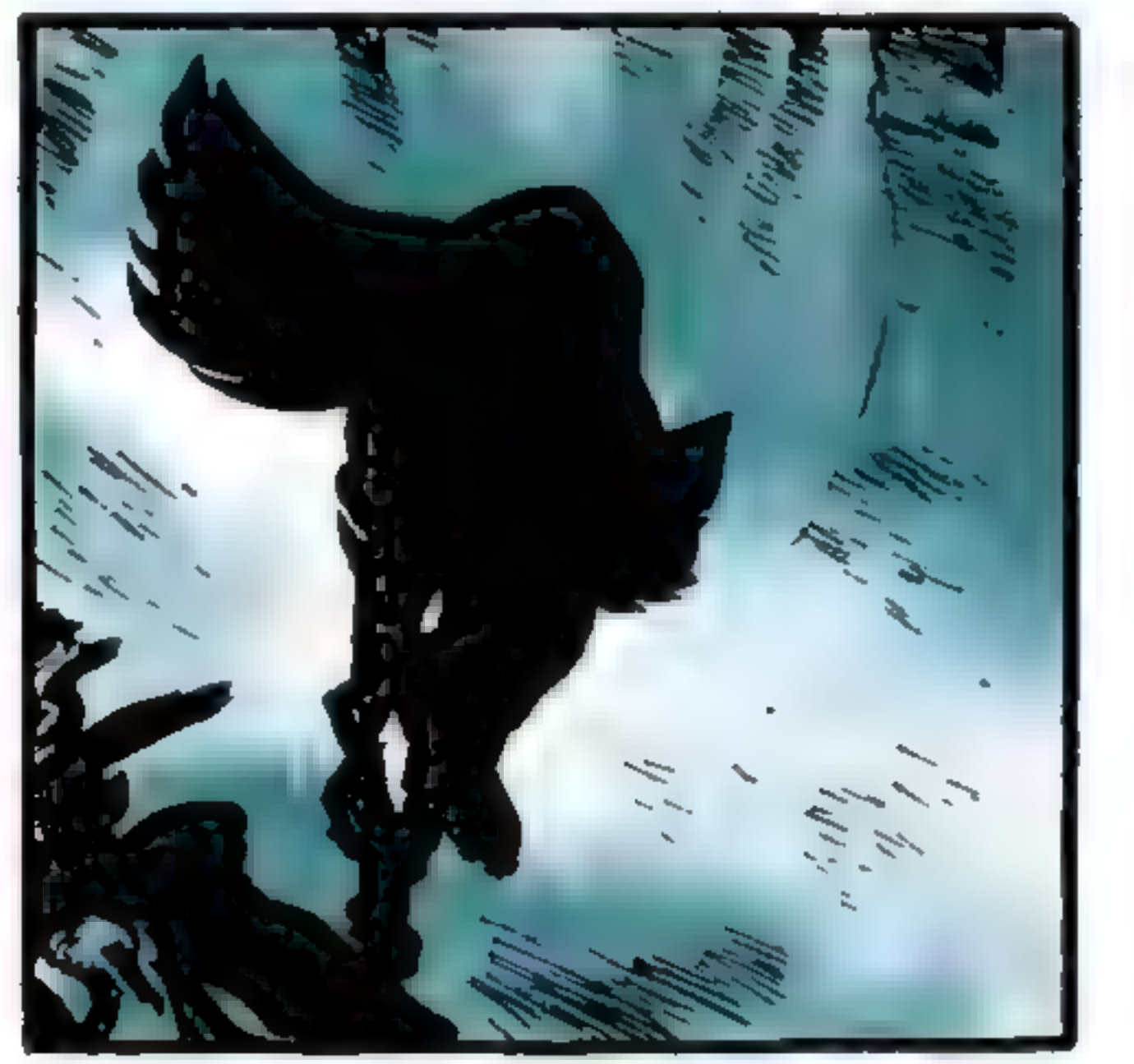
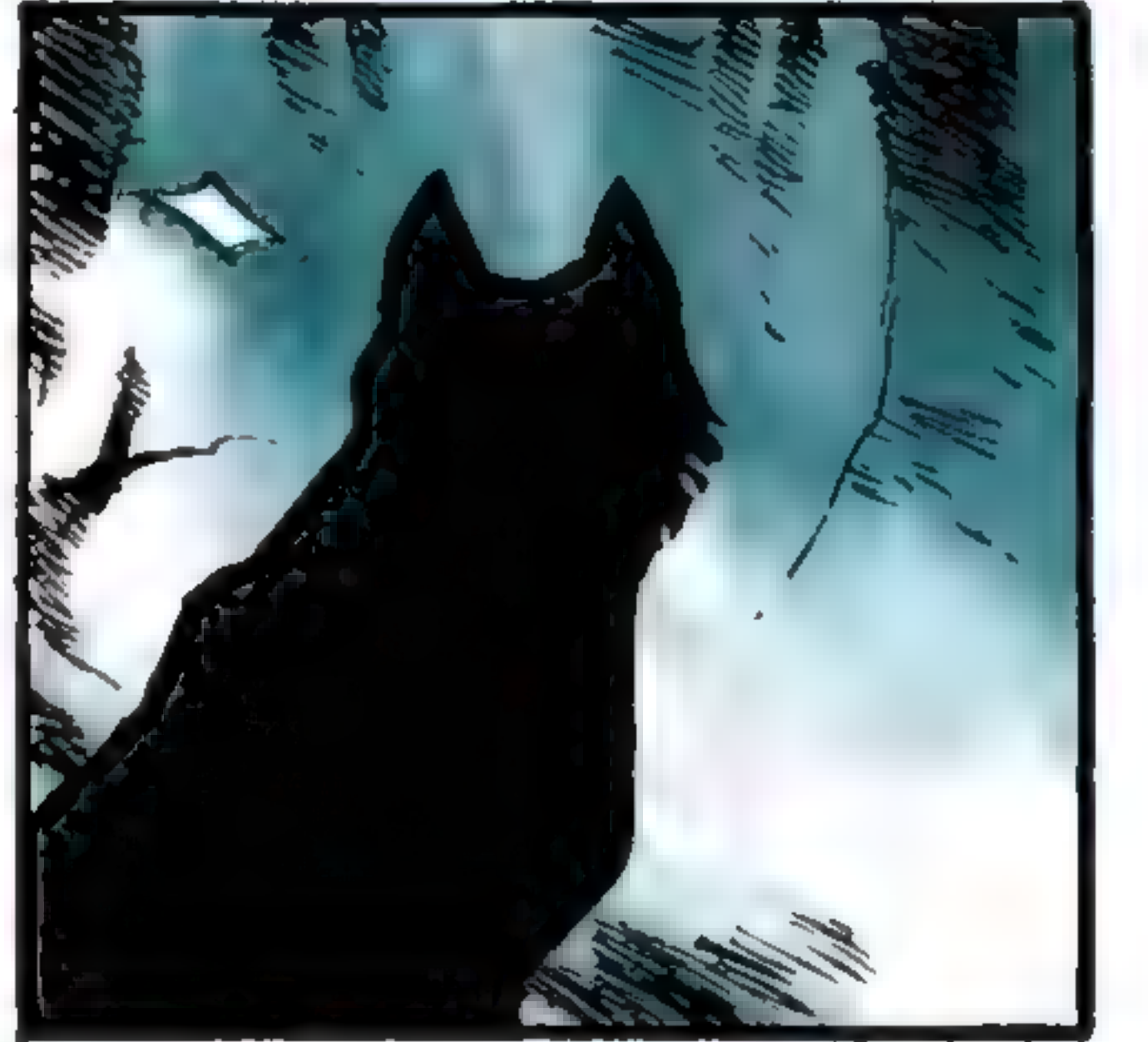
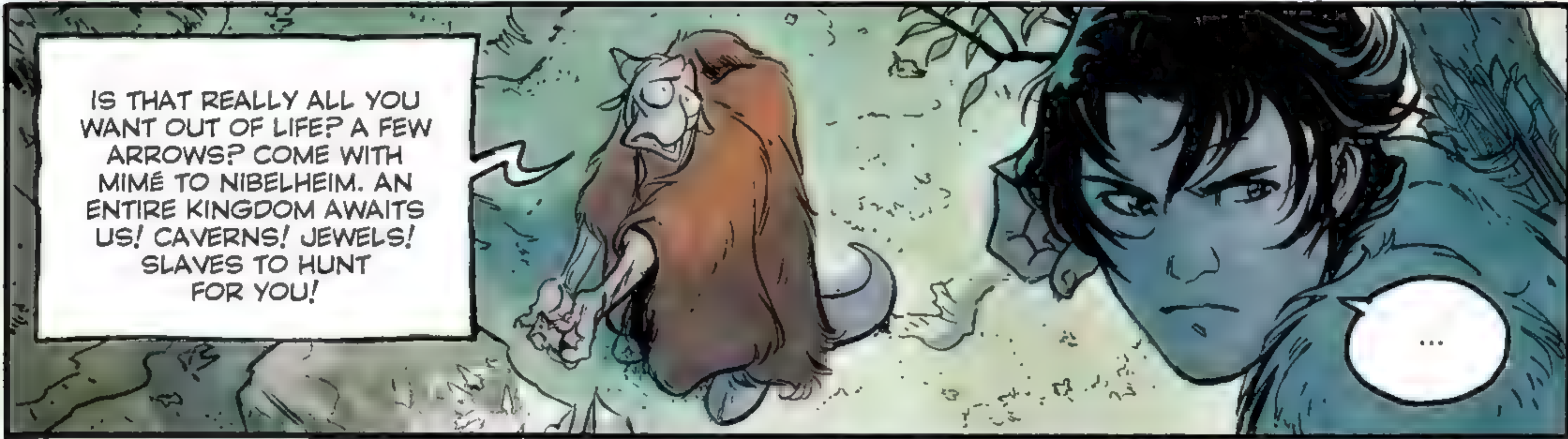
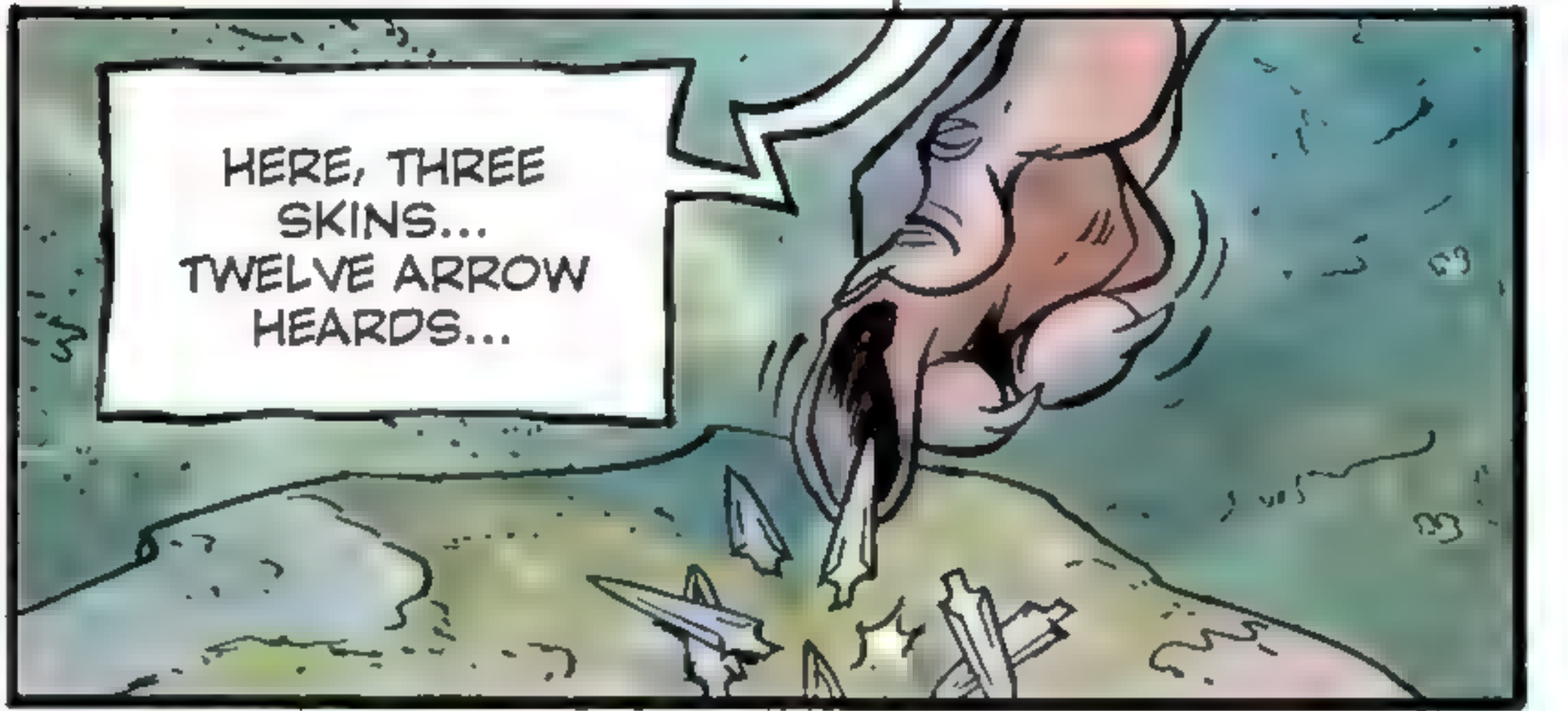




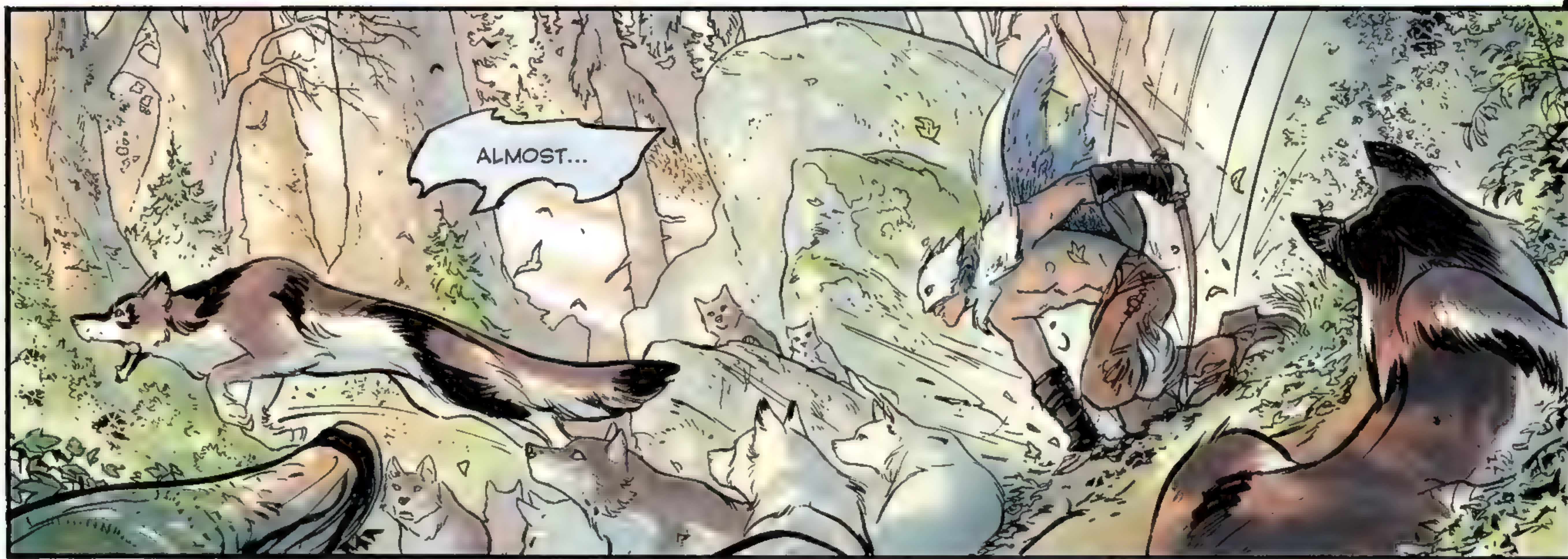




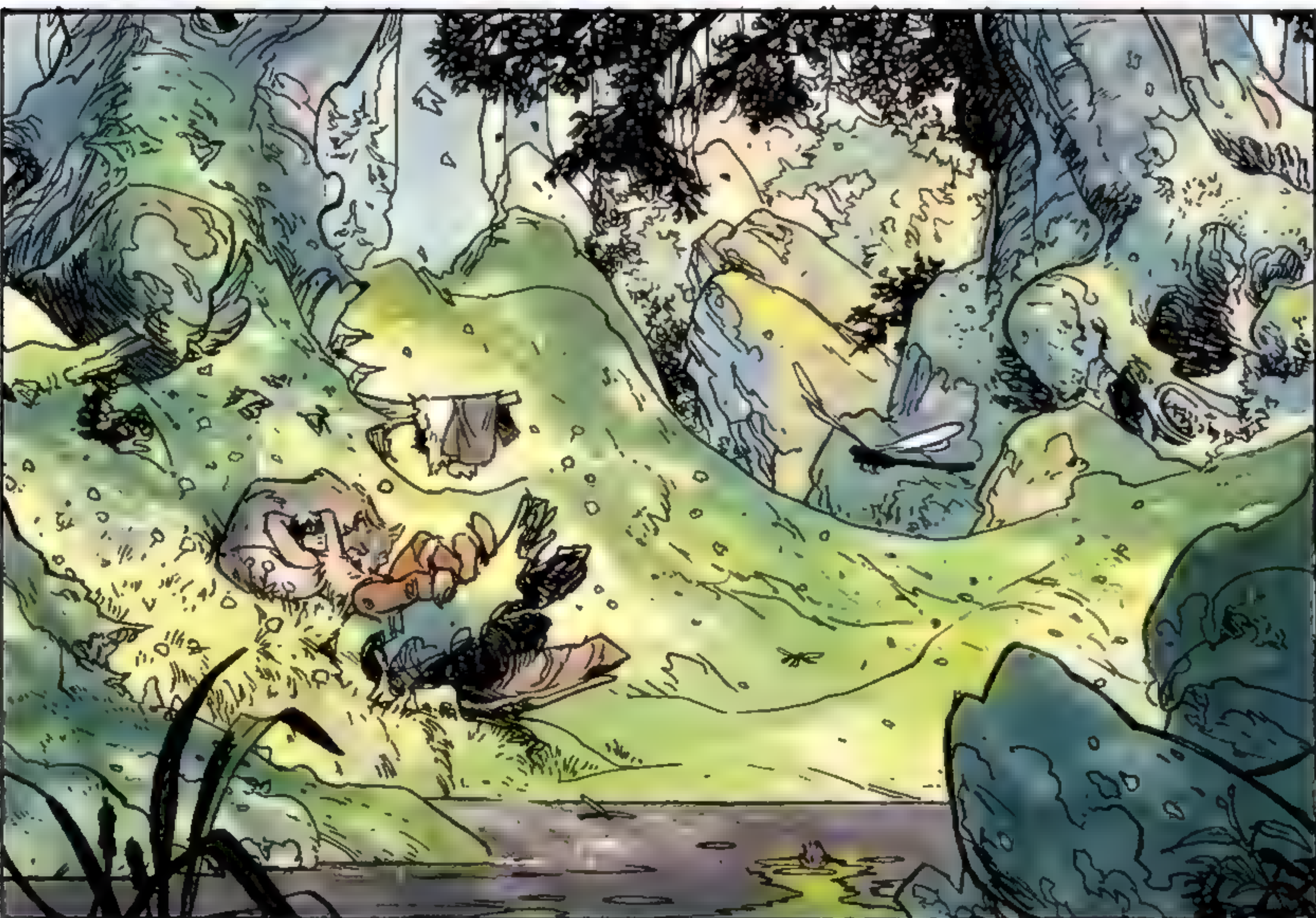
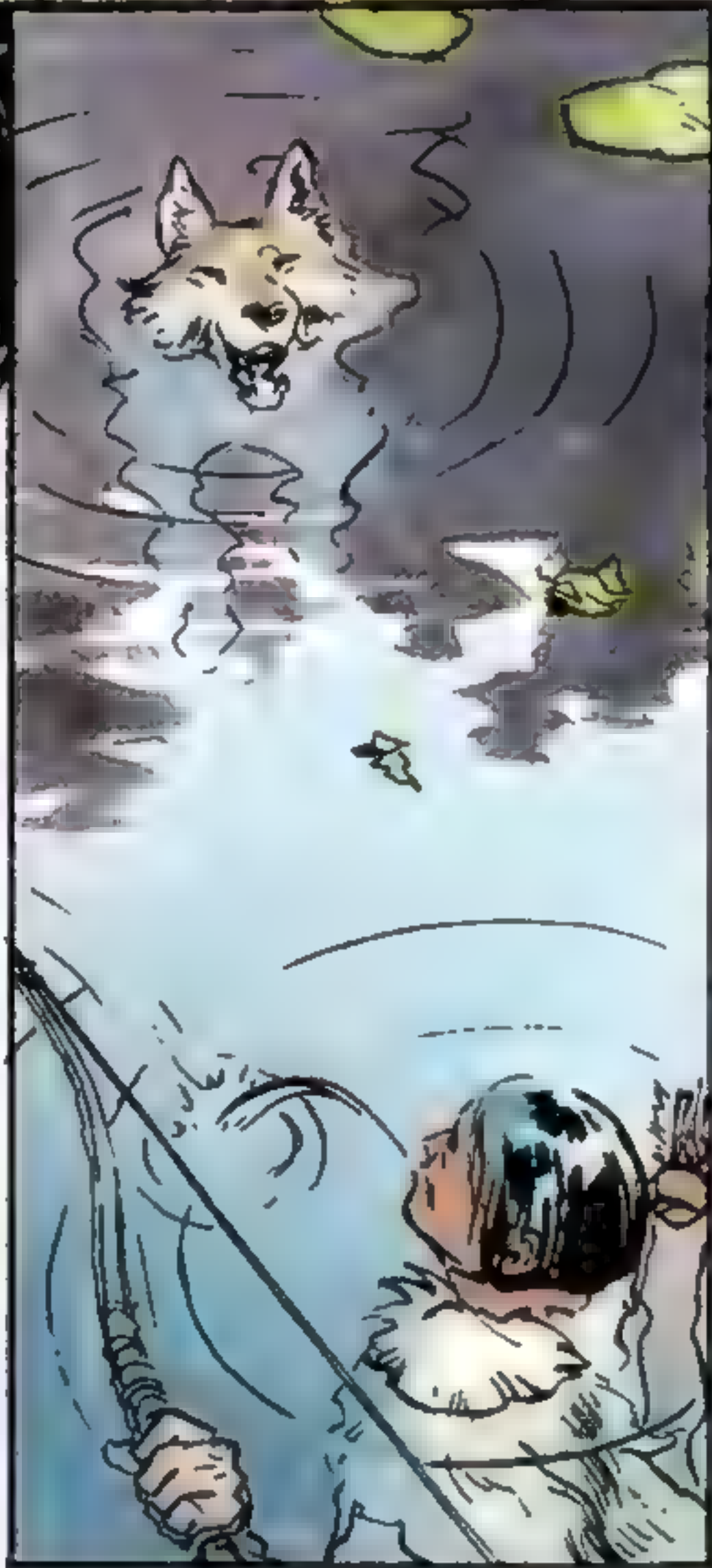
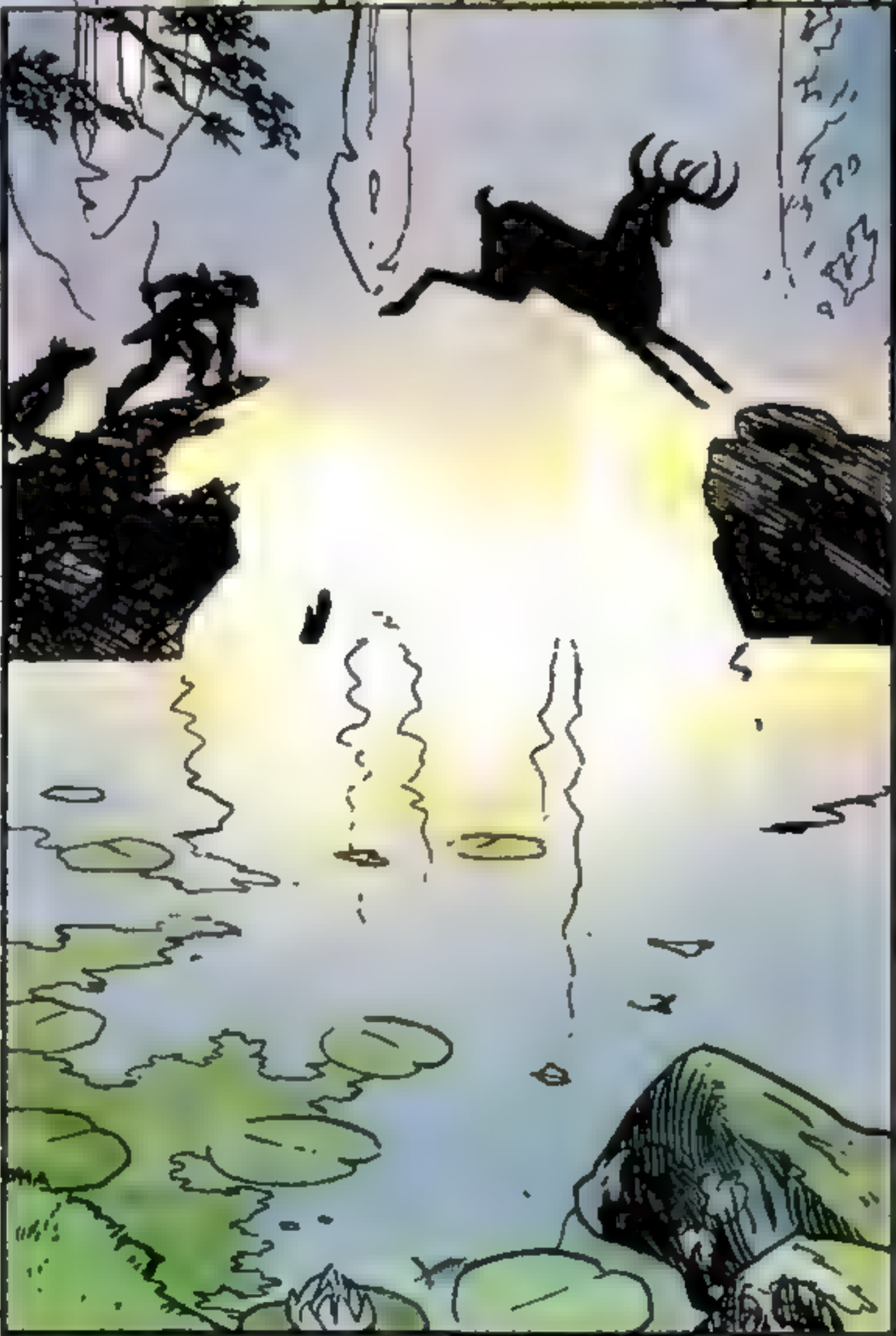




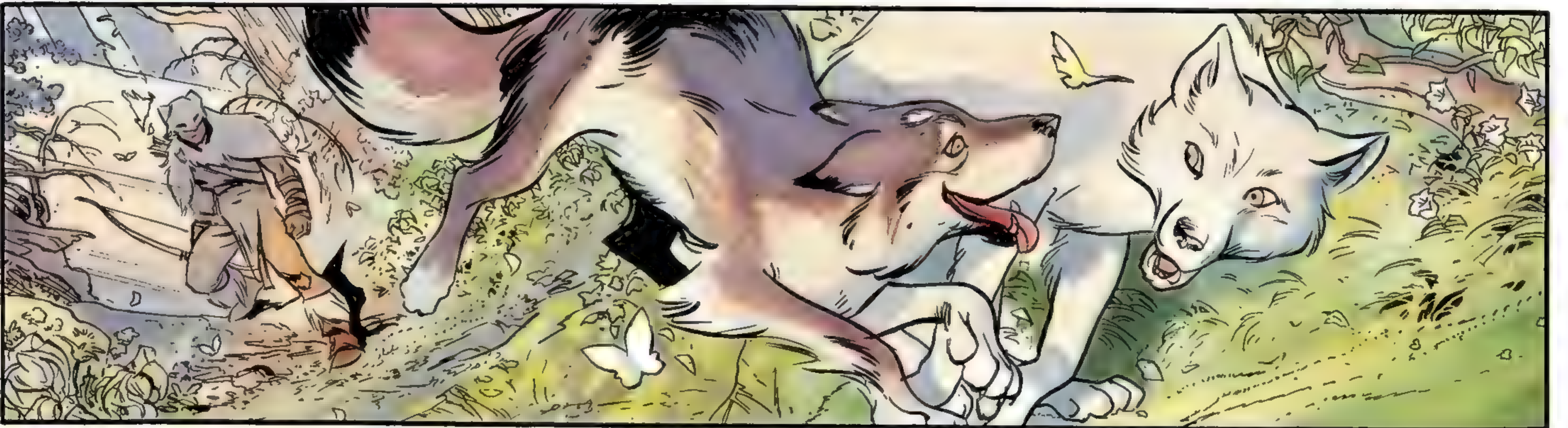
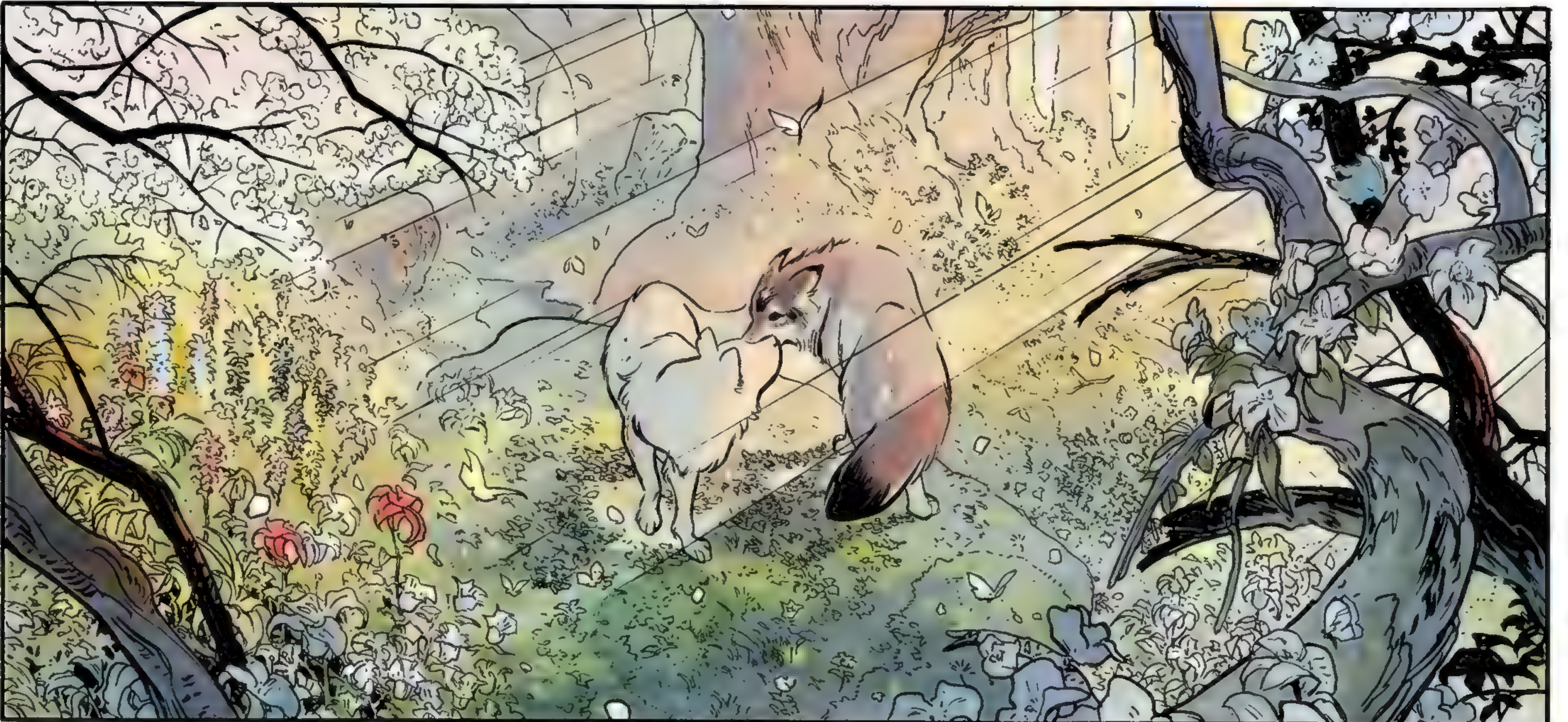




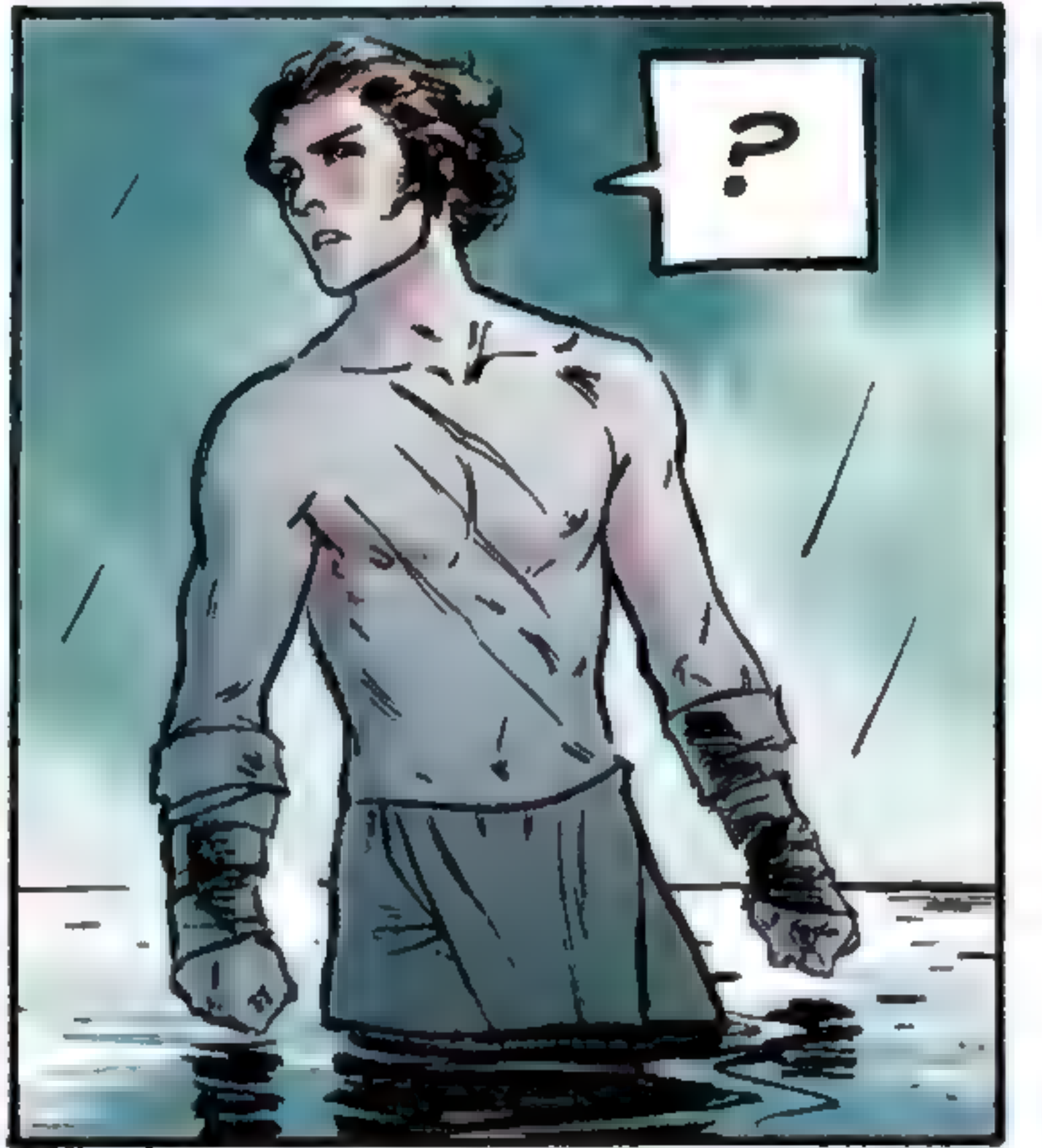
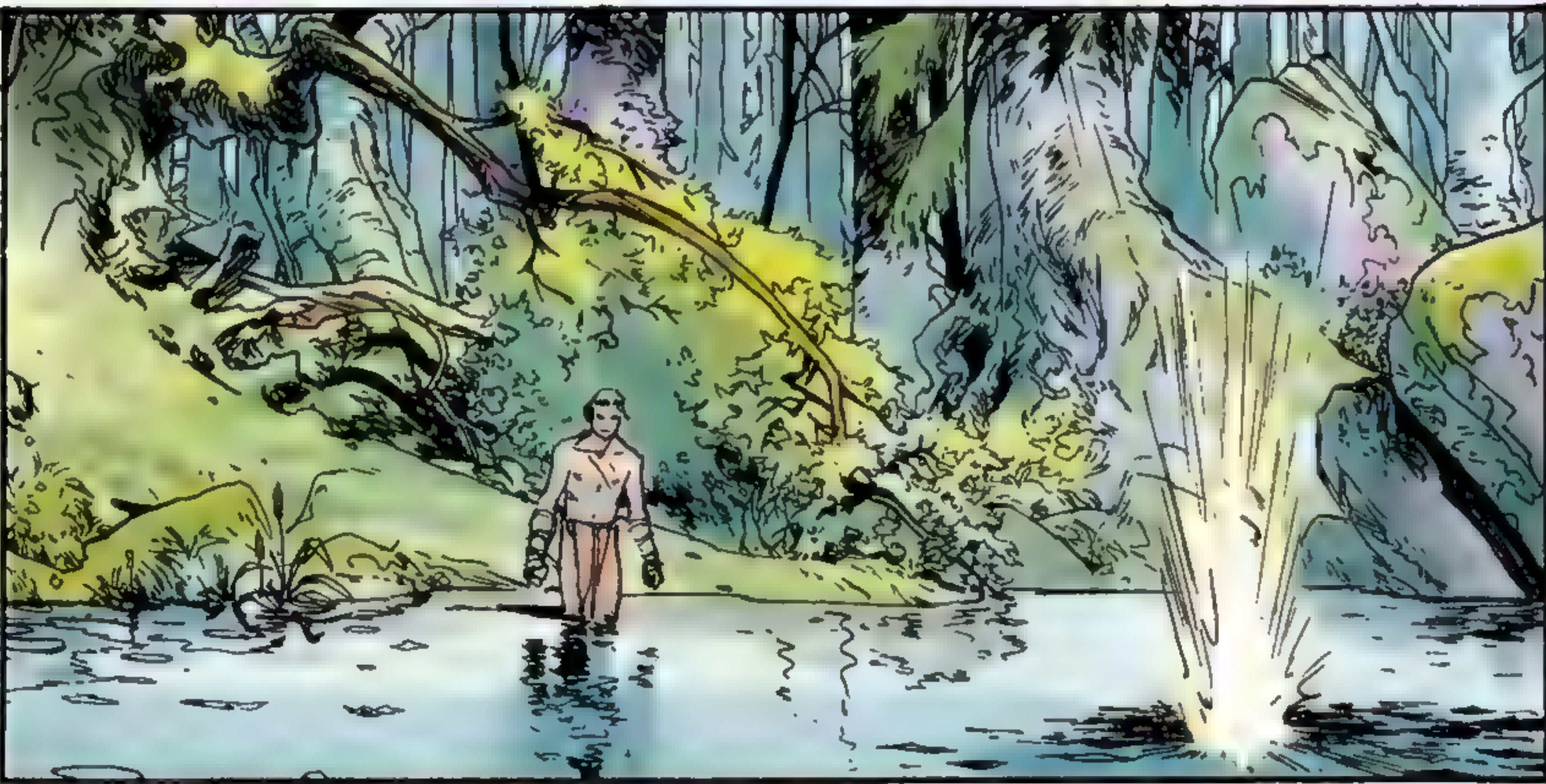
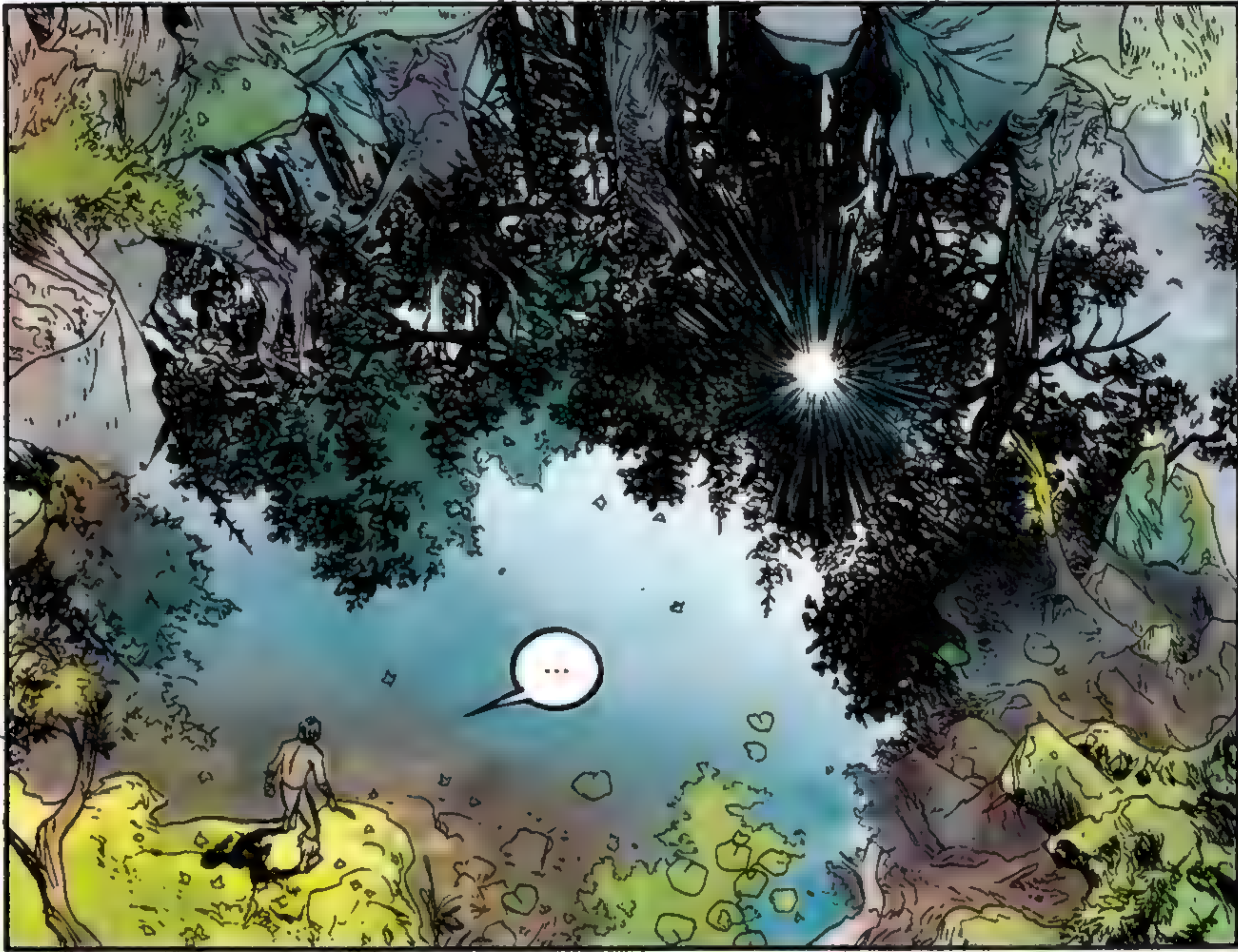
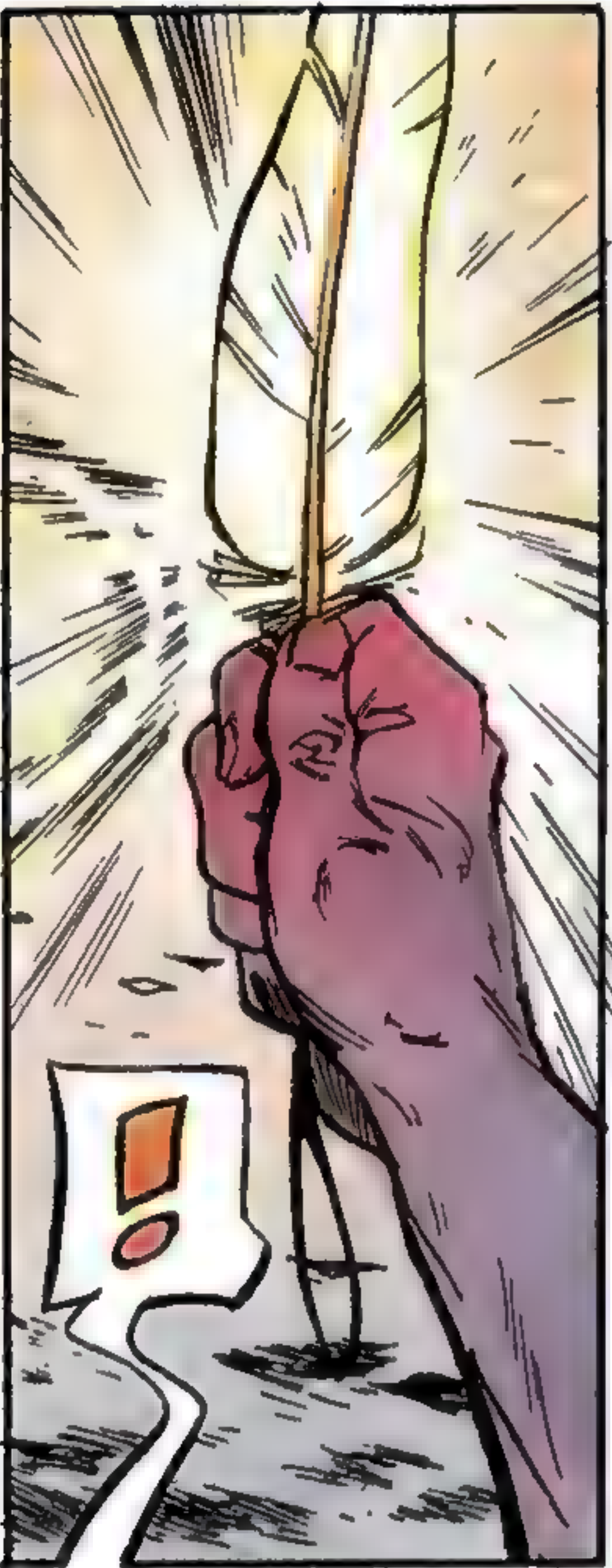
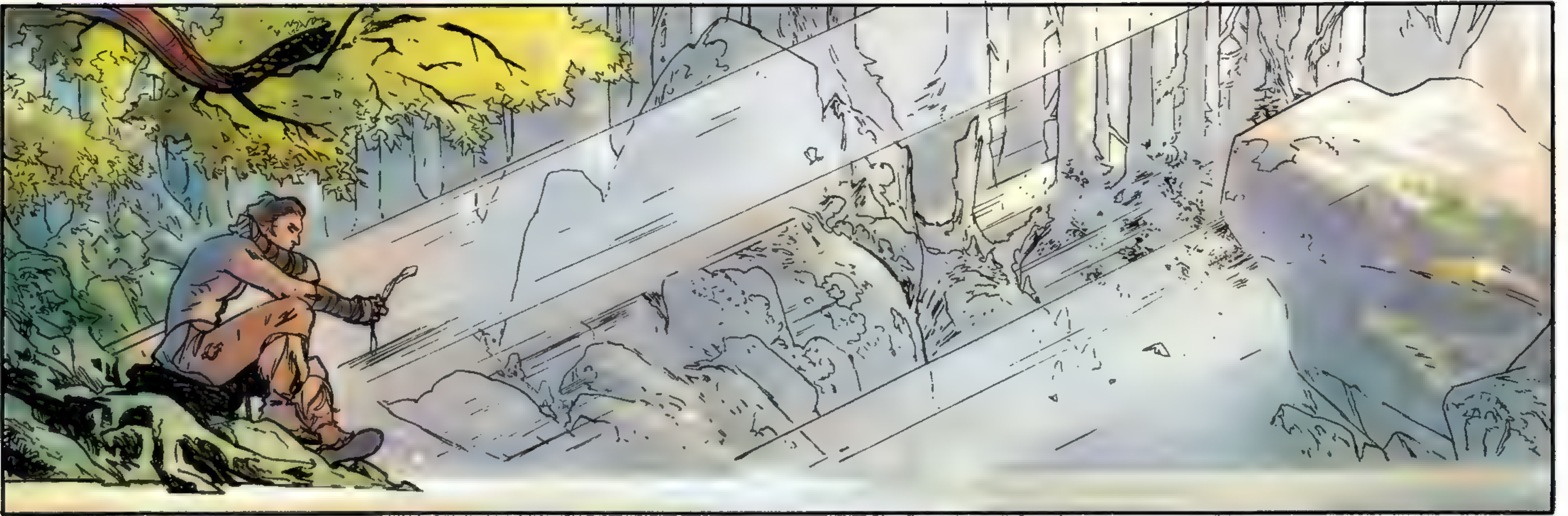




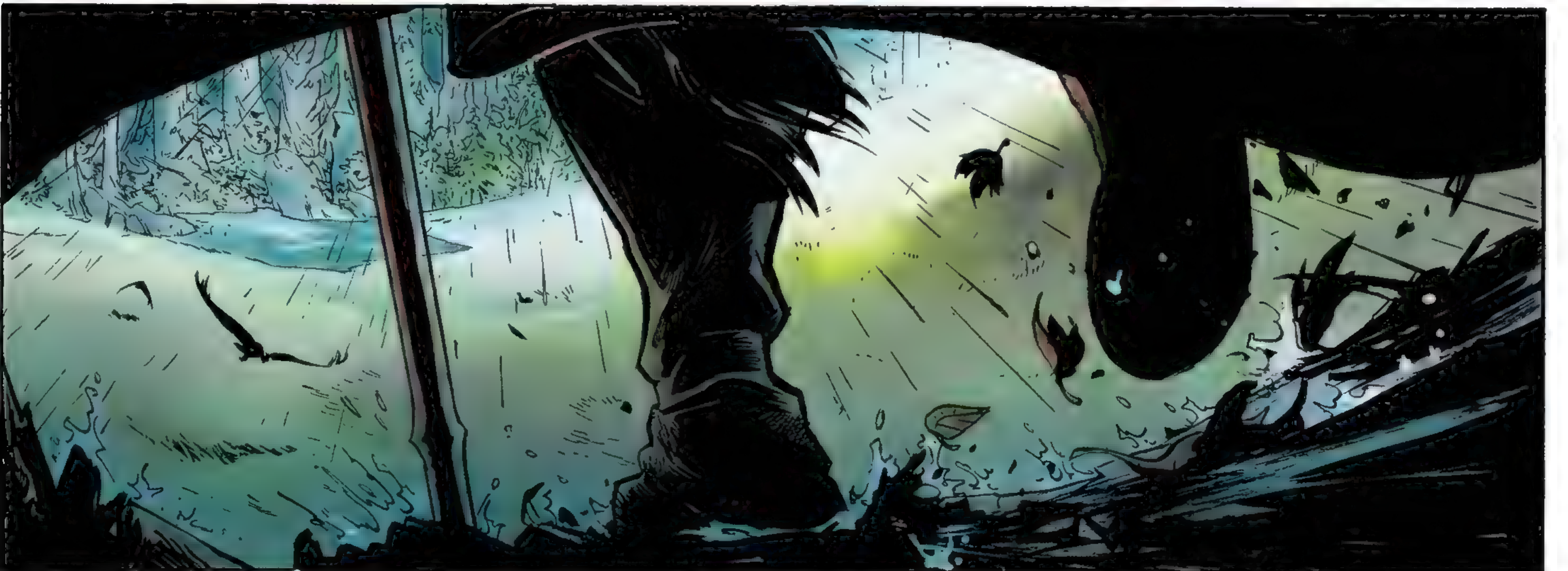
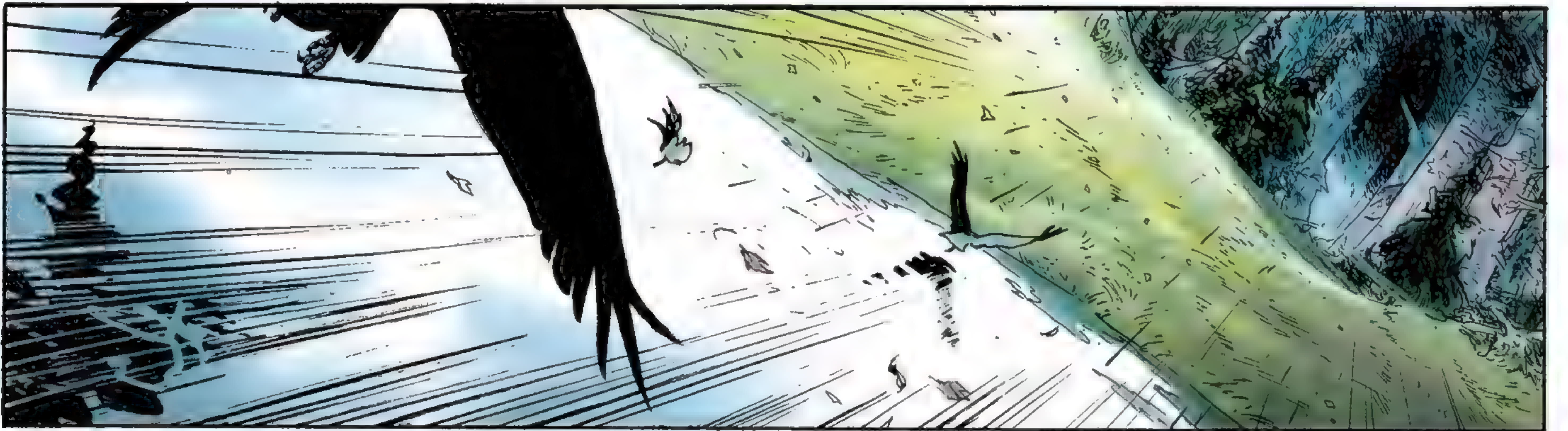
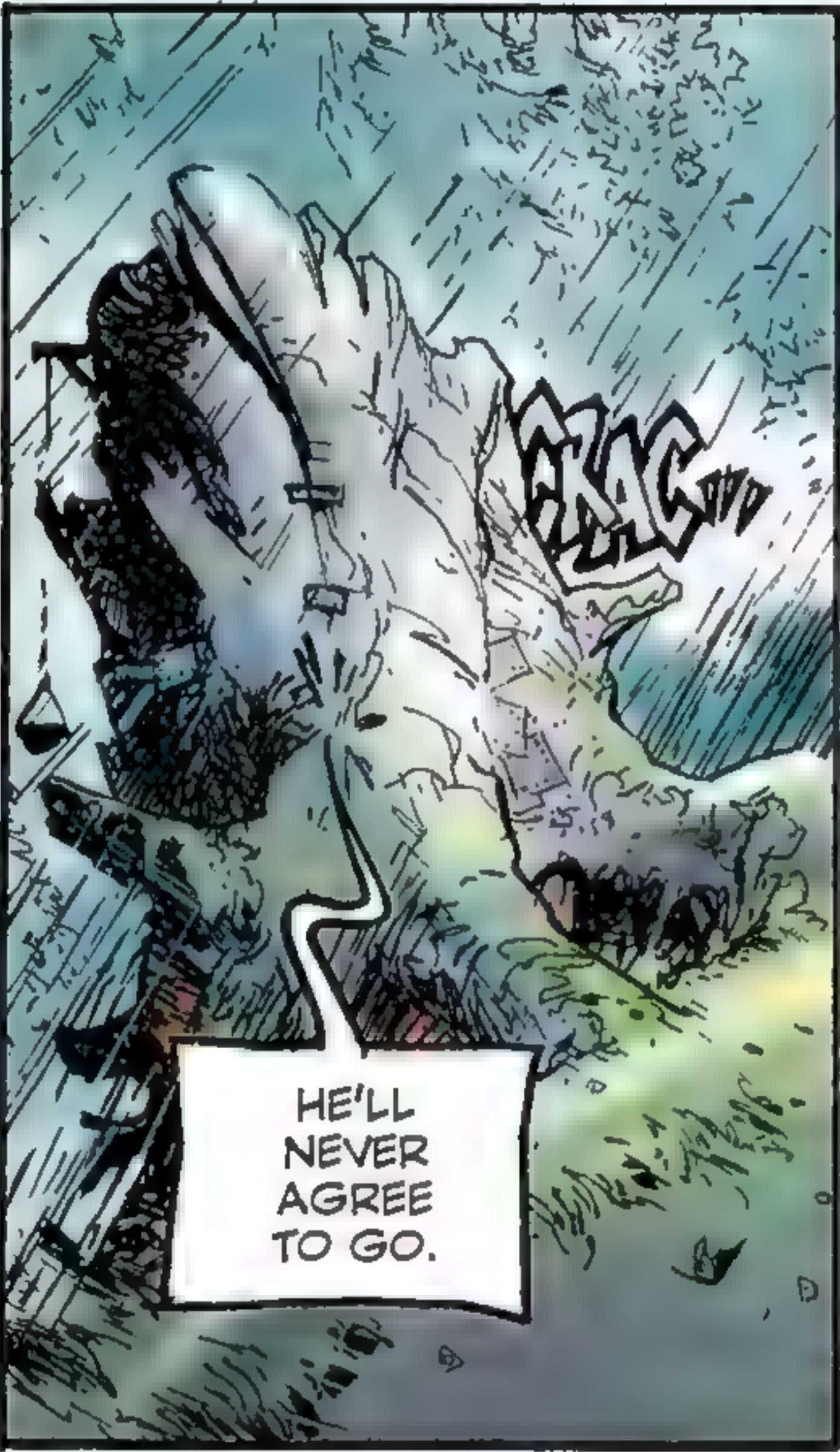
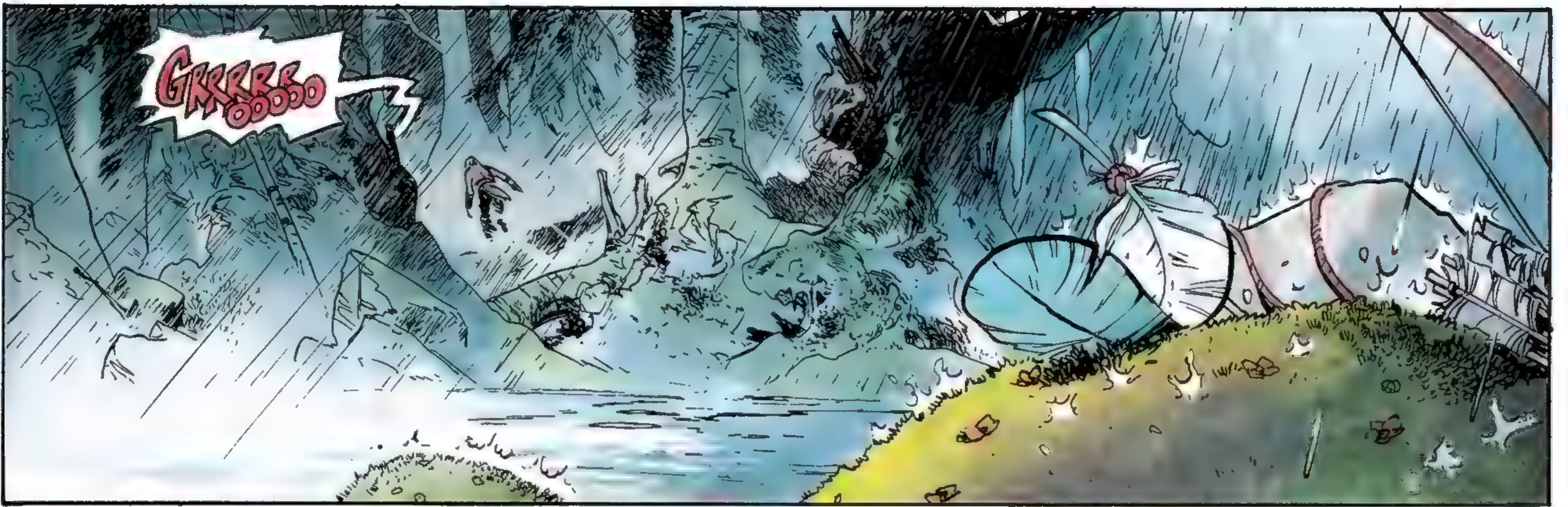




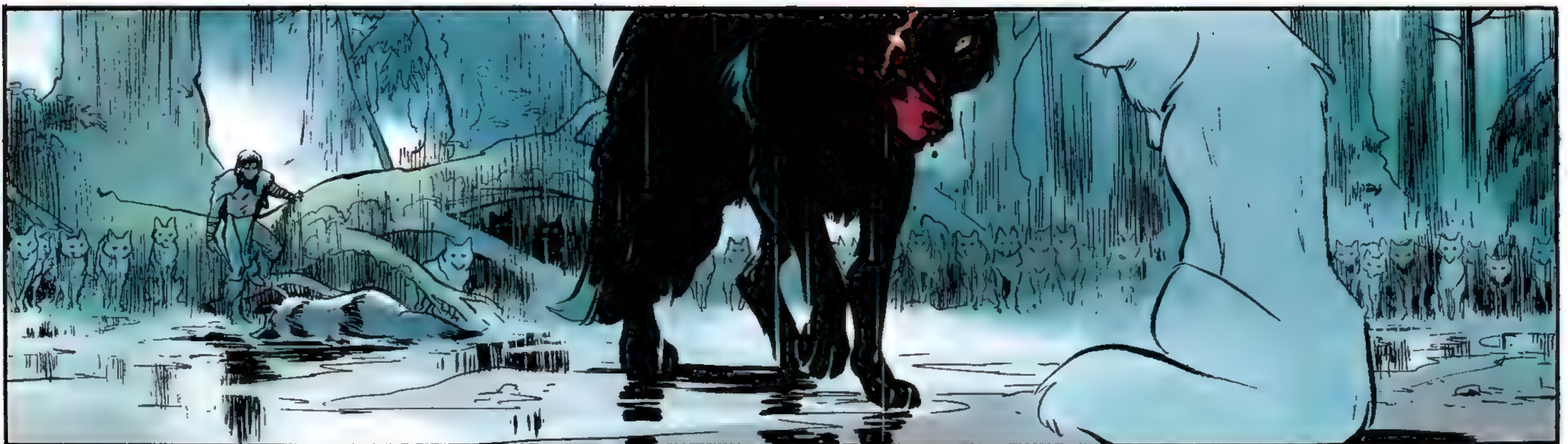
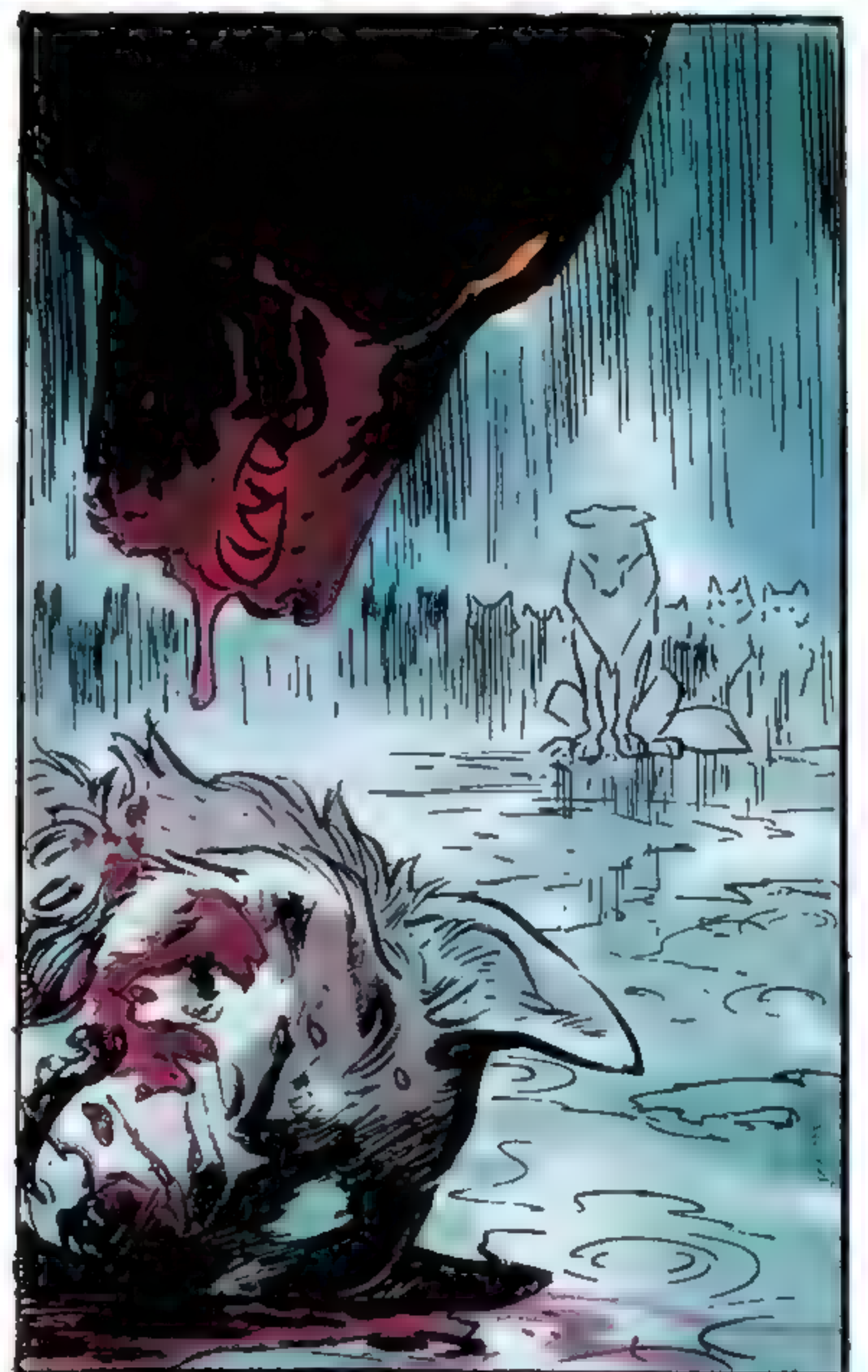
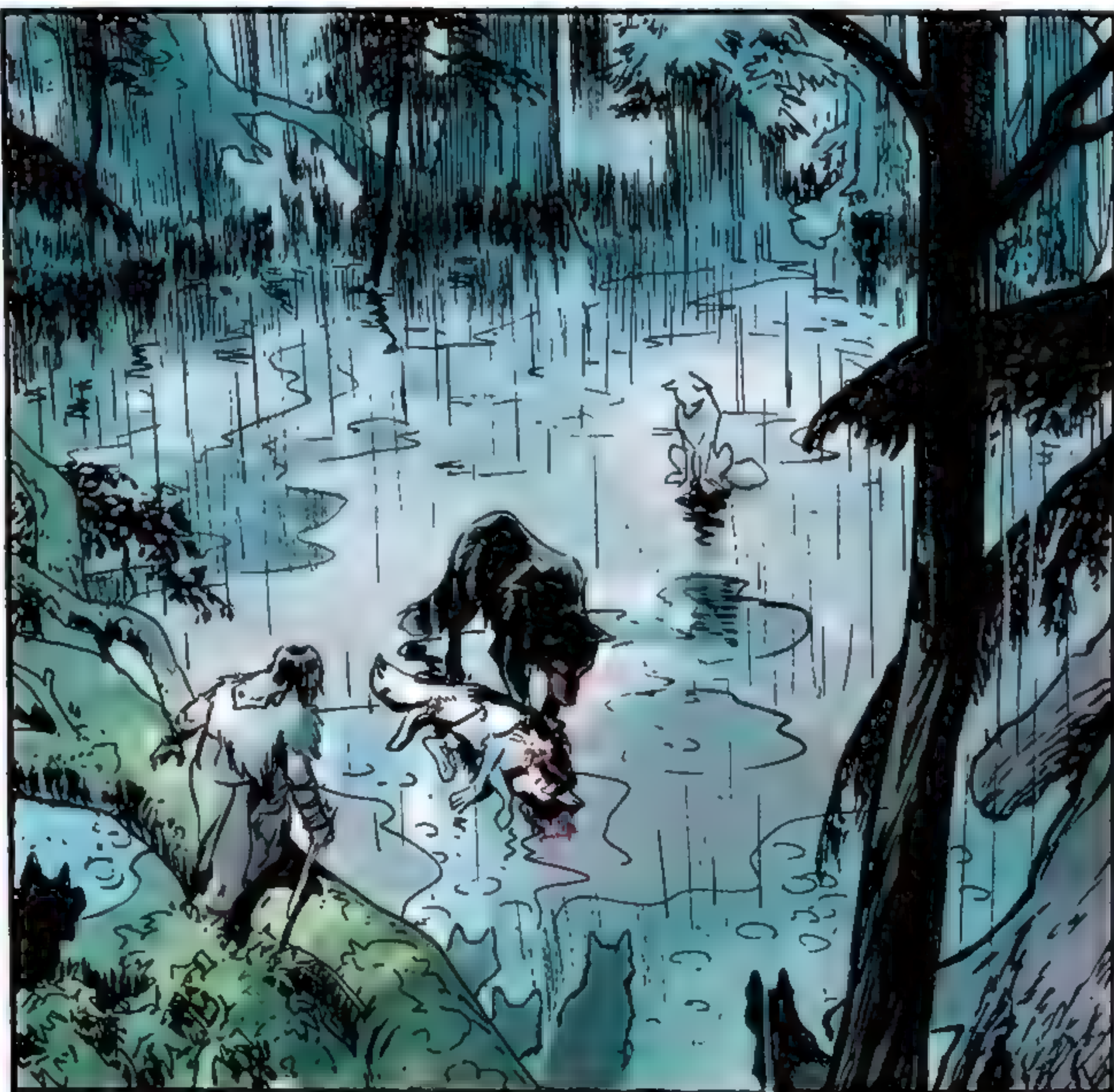
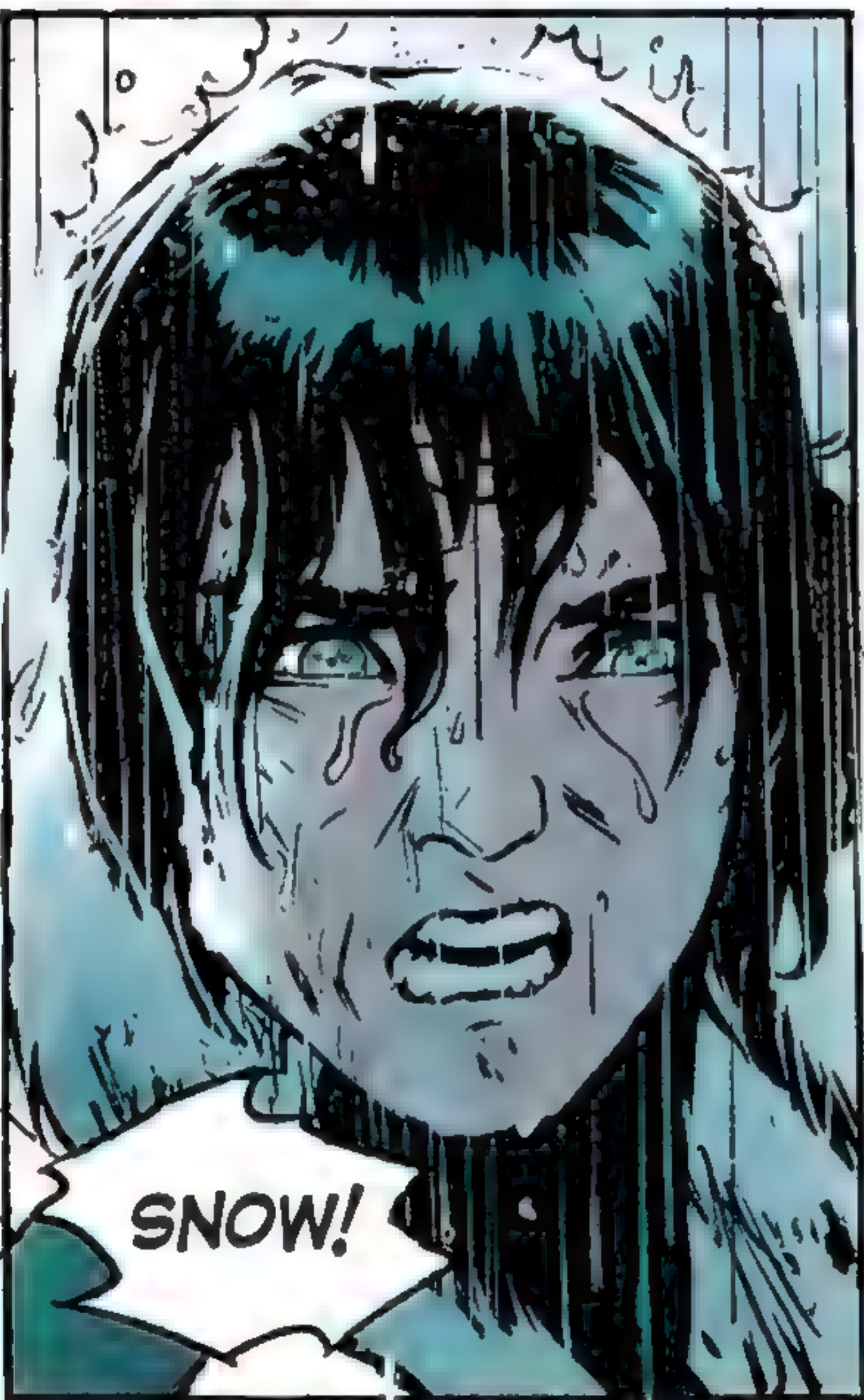
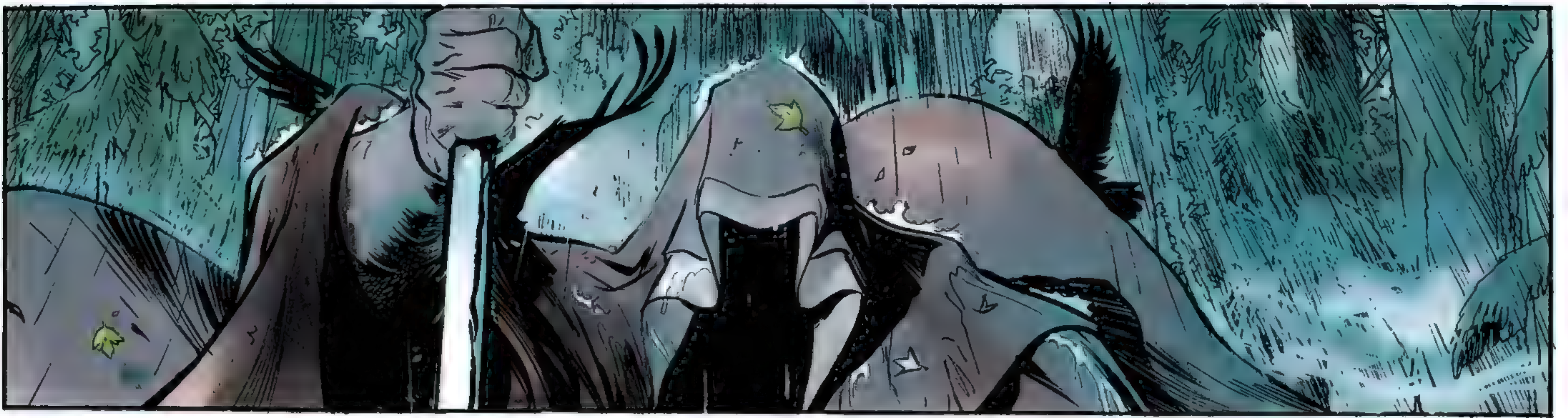




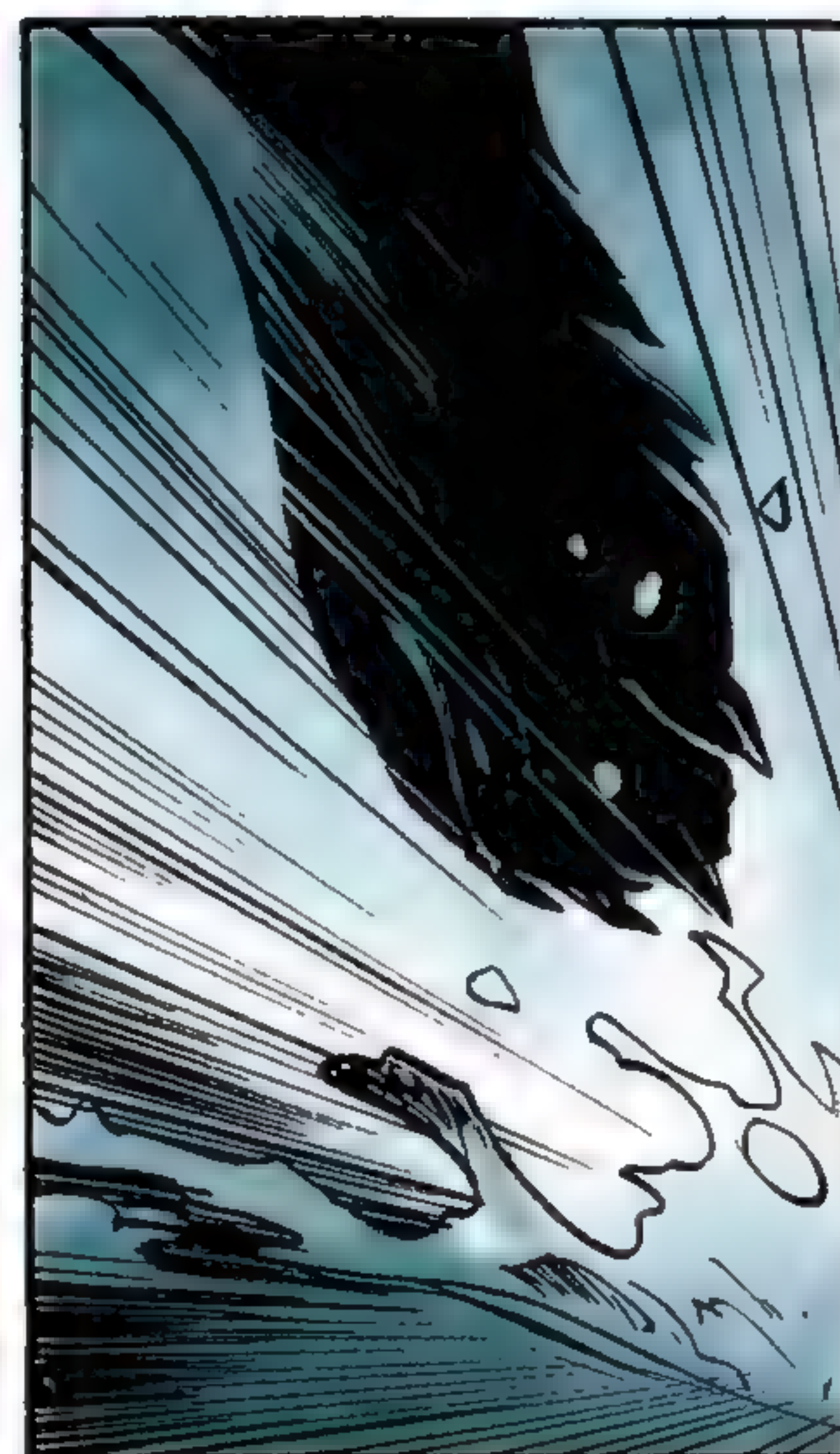
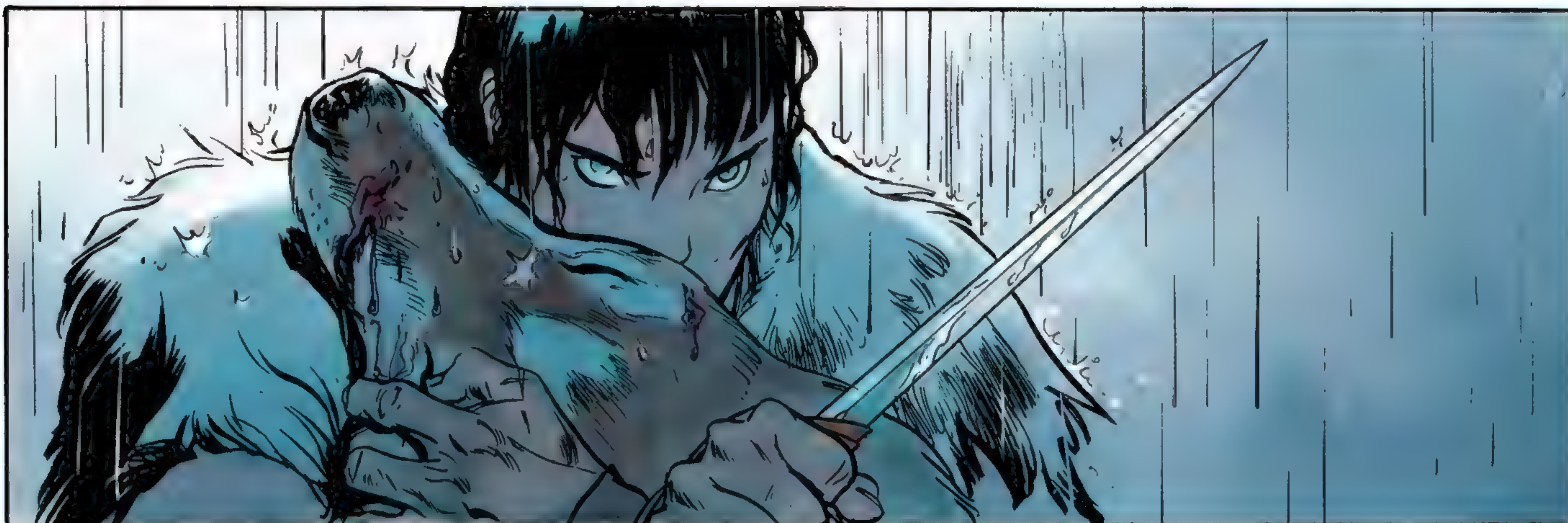
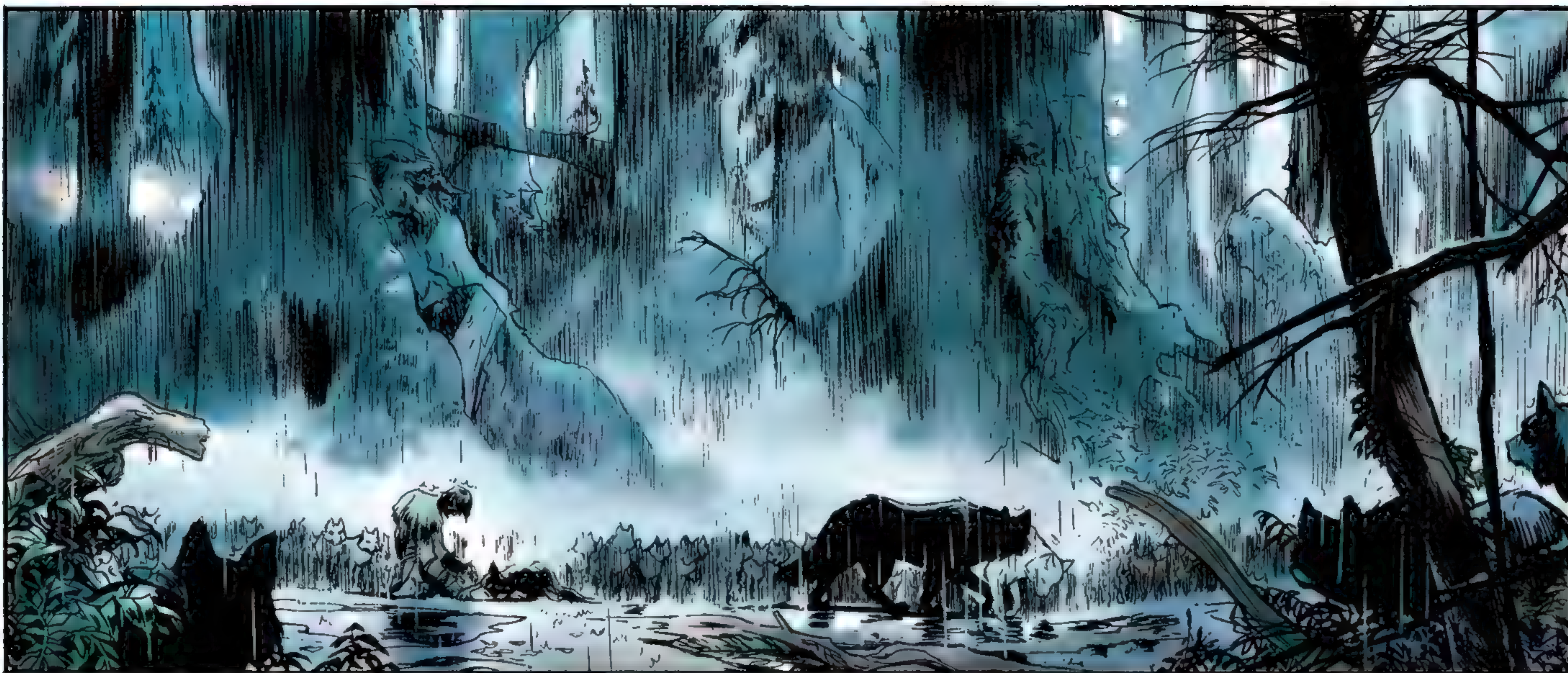








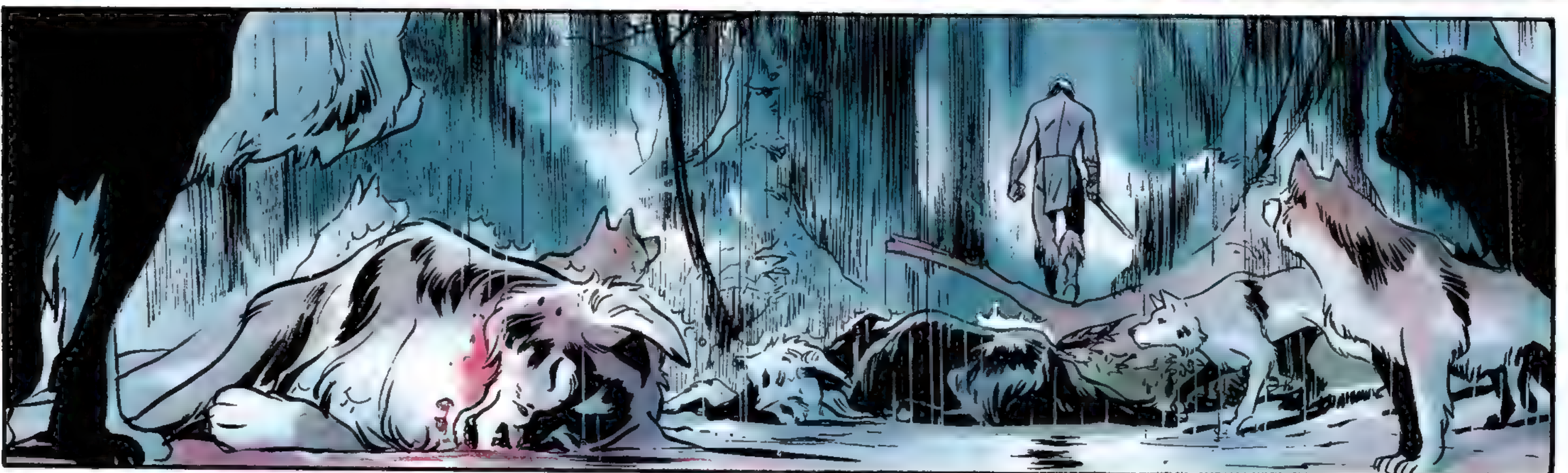
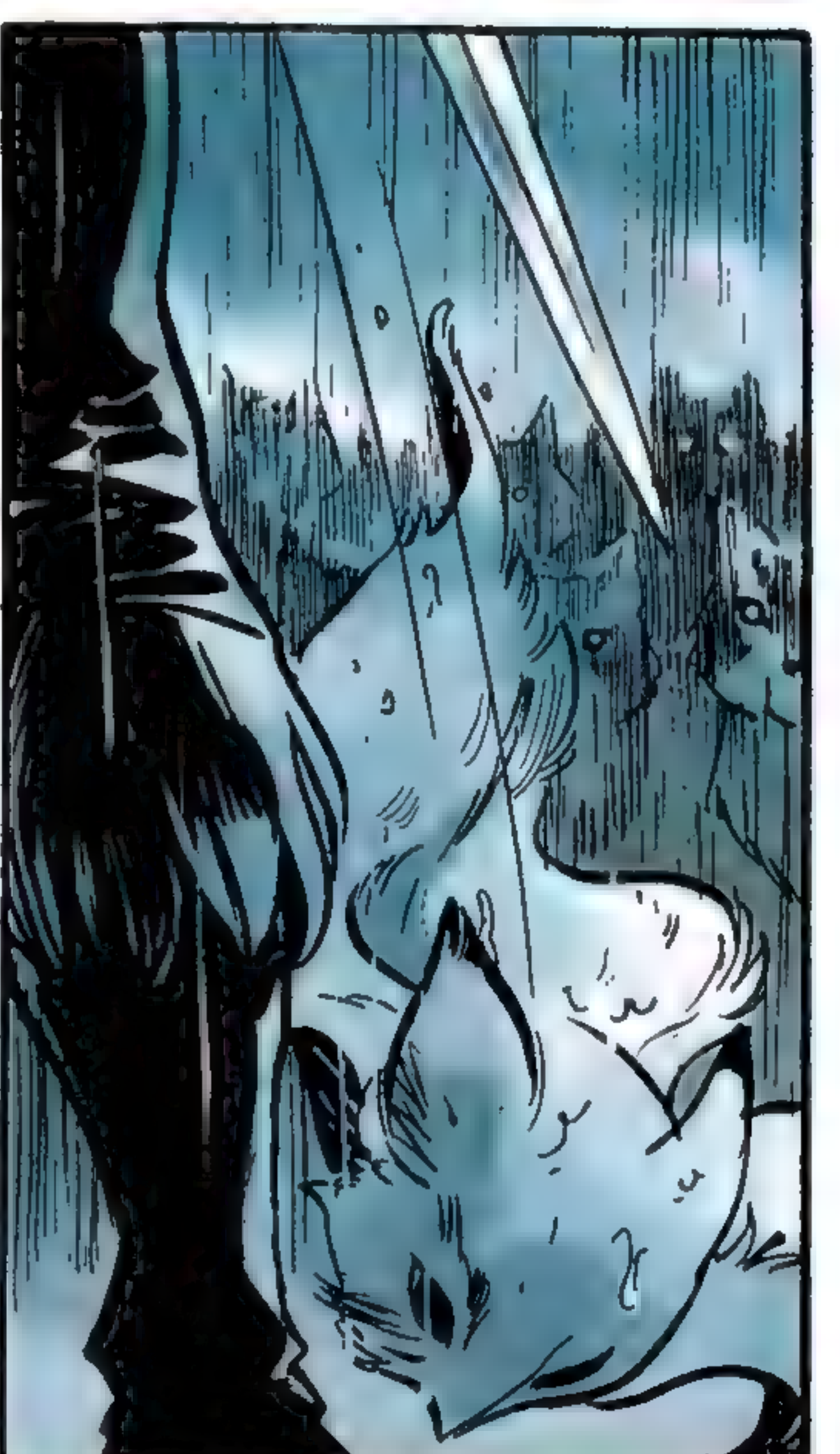
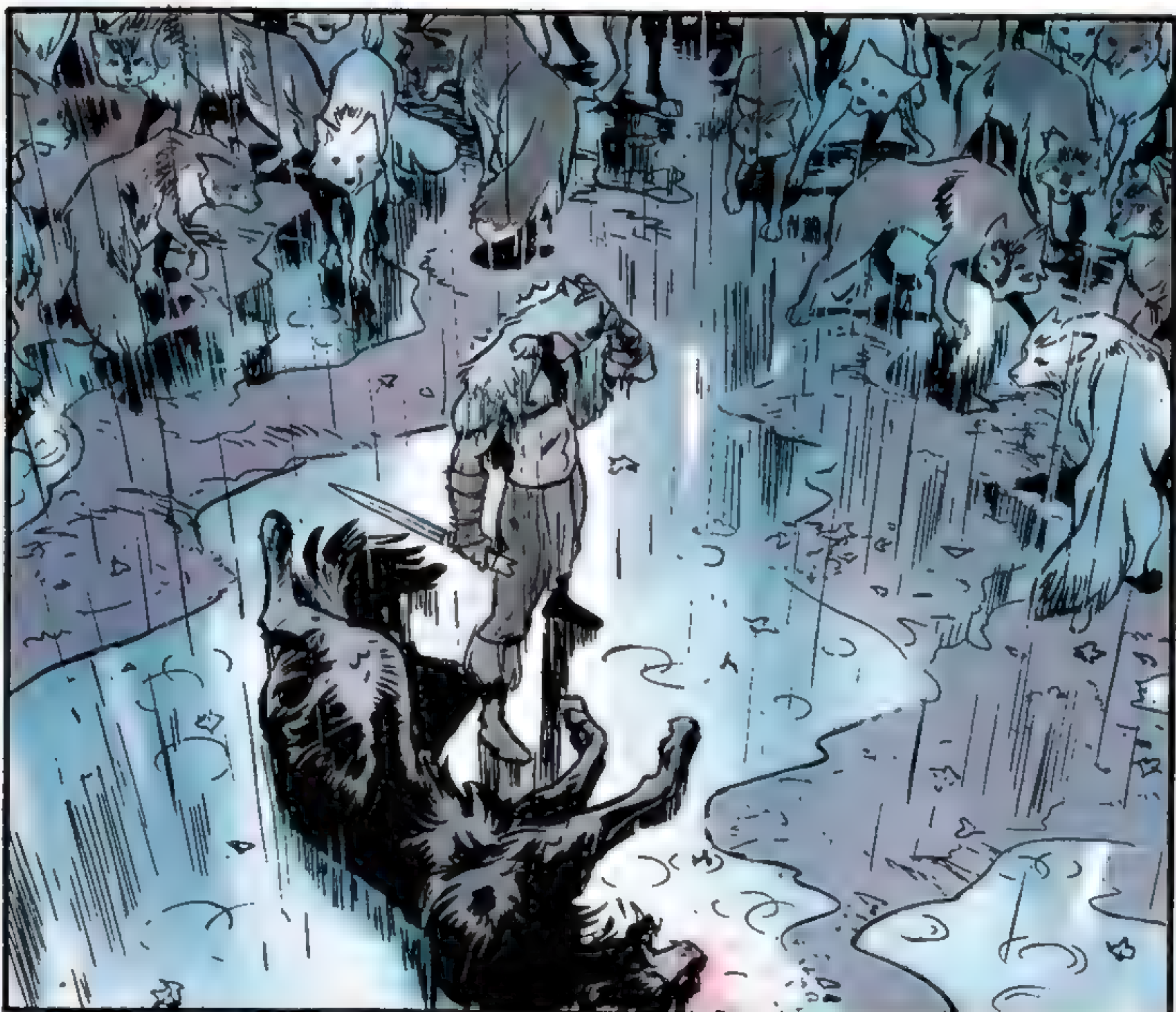
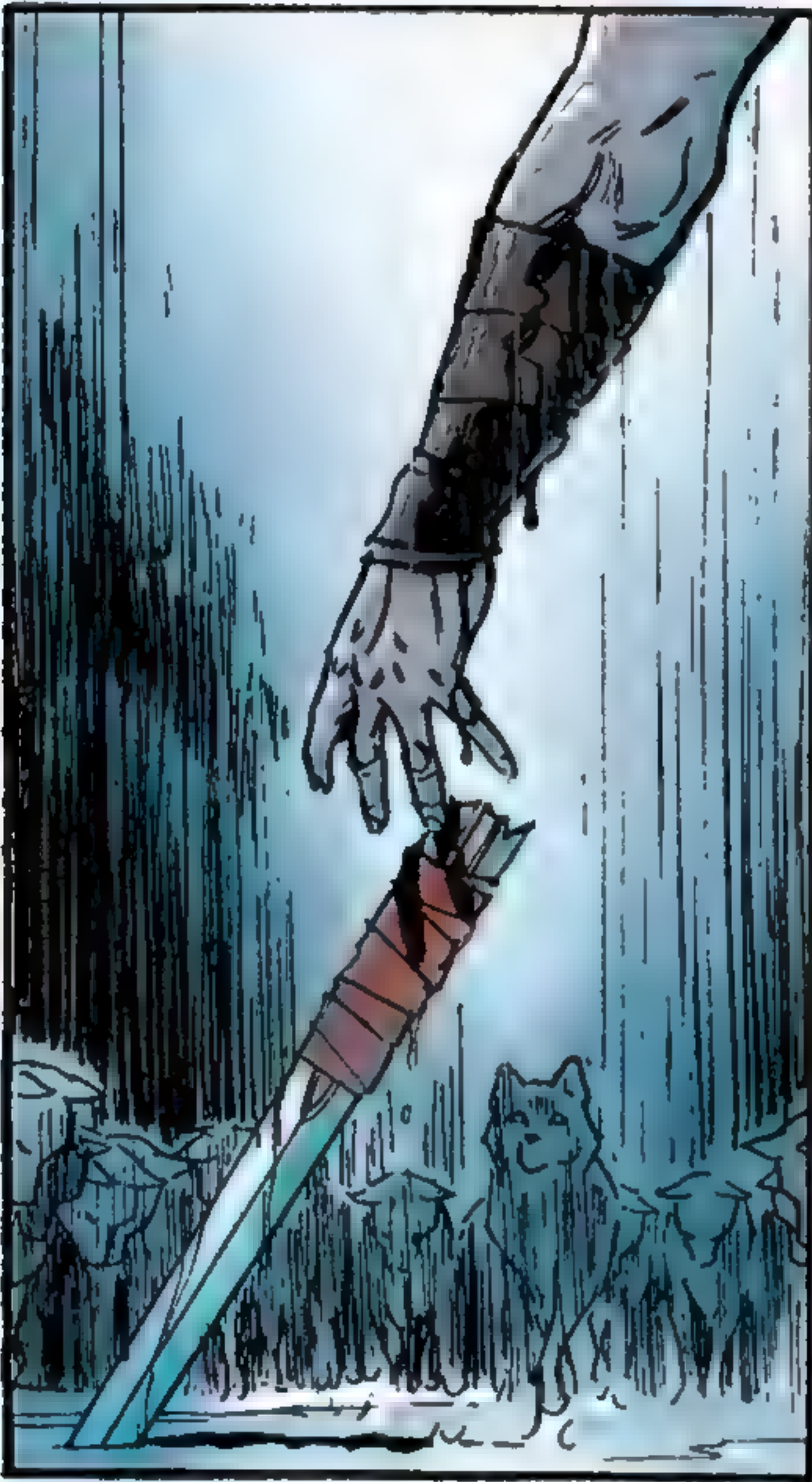




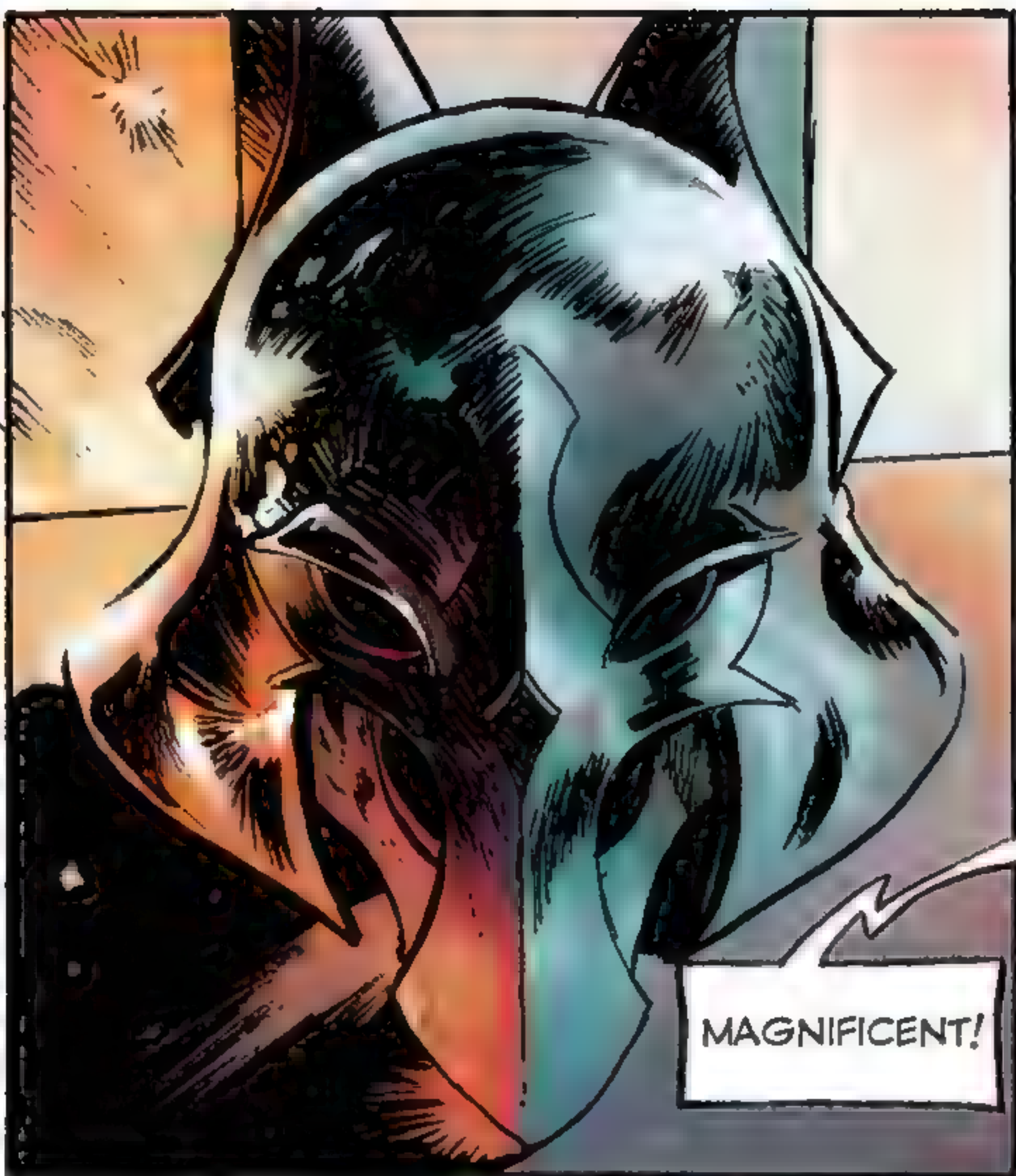




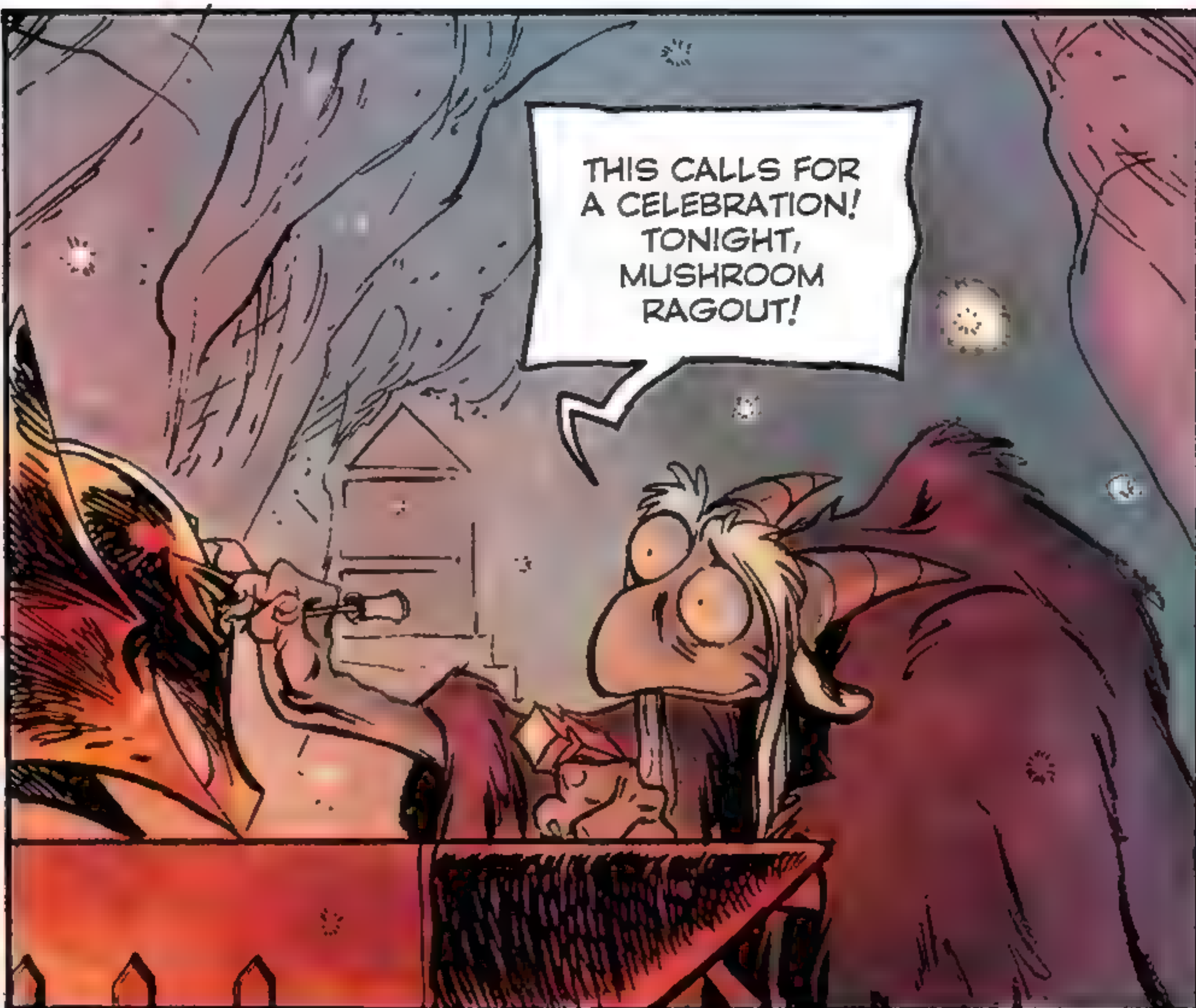




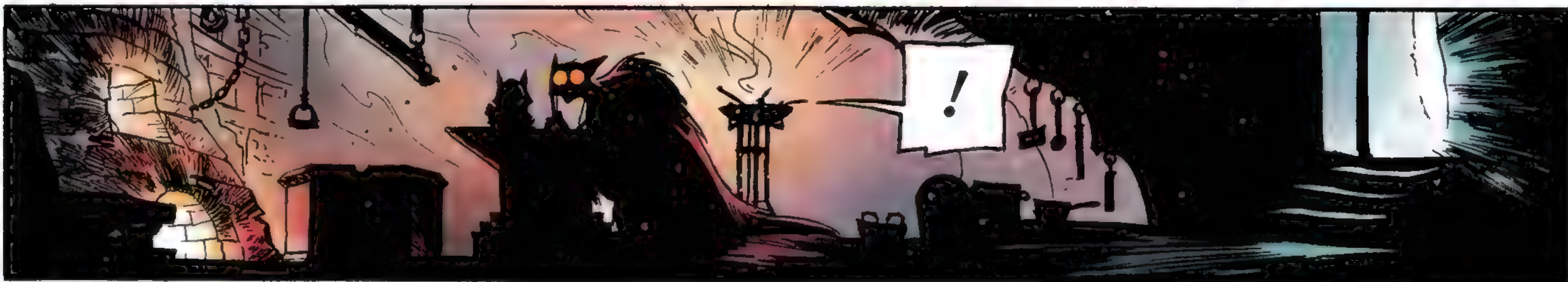
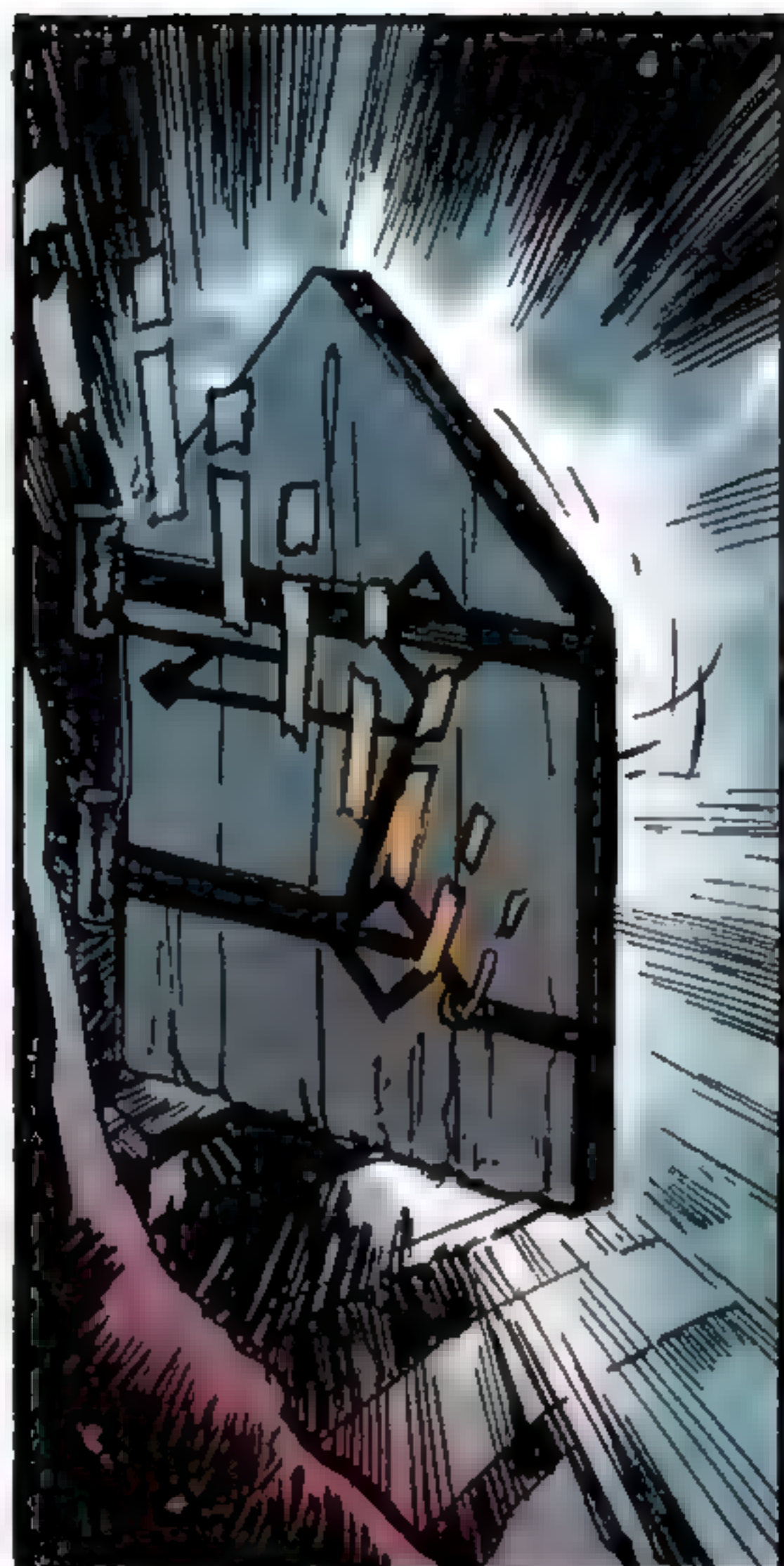




MAGNIFICENT!



THIS CALLS FOR  
A CELEBRATION!  
TONIGHT,  
MUSHROOM  
RAGOUT!



!



WHAT  
DO YOU  
WANT?

SHELTER.  
I AM THE  
WANDERER...

BE ON YOUR  
WAY, WHOEVER  
YOU ARE. MIMÉ  
DOESN'T MAKE A  
HABIT OF TAKING  
IN STRANGERS...



...AS IF HE DIDN'T  
HAVE ENOUGH  
PROBLEMS  
AS IT IS.

HE WHO  
TRAVELS KNOWS  
THE WORLD. MY  
COUNSEL COULD  
BE OF HELP  
TO YOU.



YOU'RE STILL HERE?  
MIMÉ KNOWS  
ENOUGH. SURELY  
MORE THAN YOU,  
VAGABOND!

WOULD  
YOU CARE  
TO PROVE  
IT?



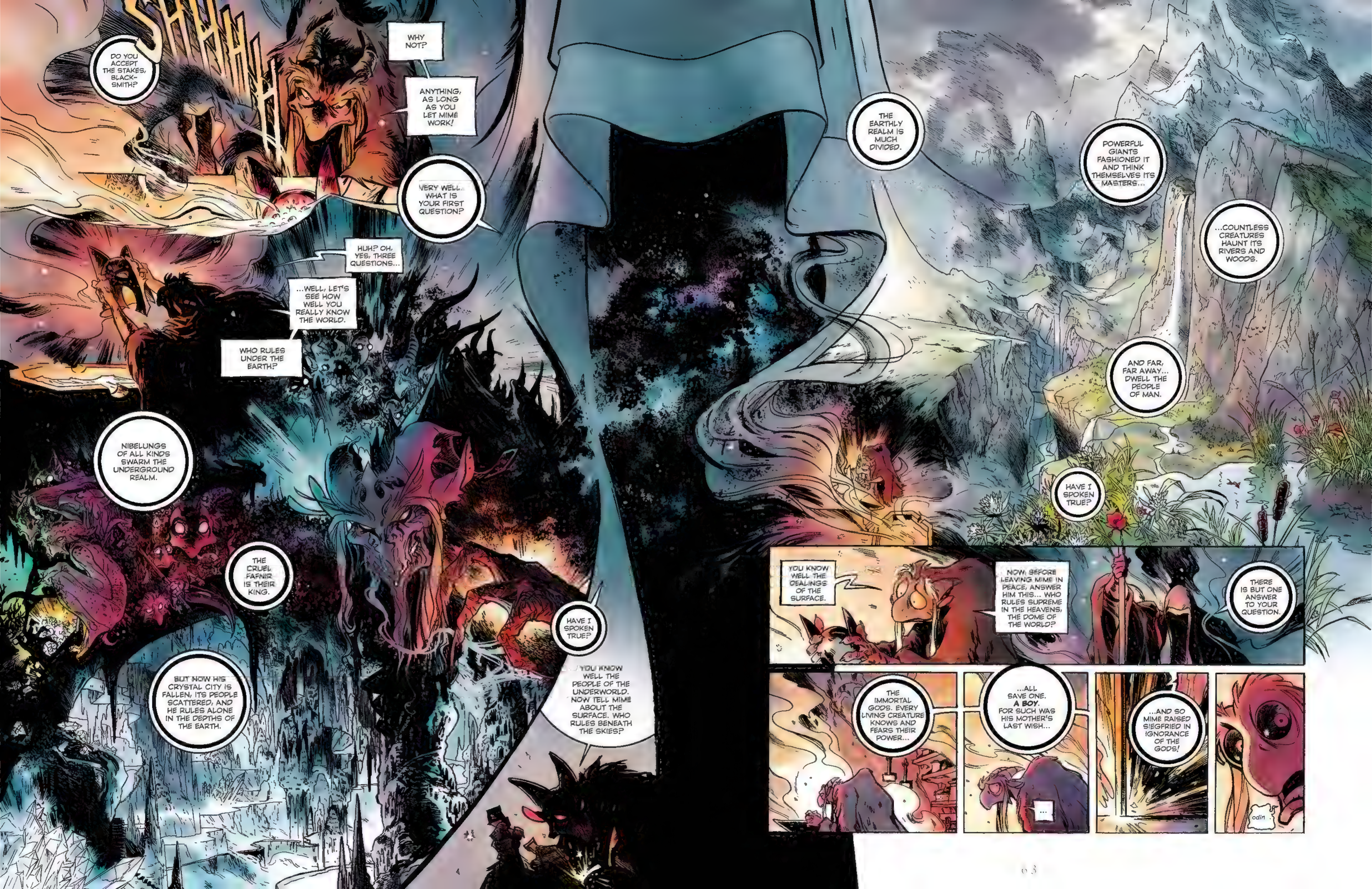
SHHHH

THEN  
YOU'LL  
LEAVE?



THREE  
QUESTIONS.  
THREE  
CORRECT  
ANSWERS WILL  
REDEEM HIS  
LIFE.





DO YOU  
ACCEPT  
THE STAKES,  
BLACK-  
SMITH?

WHY  
NOT?

ANYTHING,  
AS LONG  
AS YOU  
LET MIMÉ  
WORK!

VERY WELL.  
WHAT IS  
YOUR FIRST  
QUESTION?

HUH? OH,  
YES, THREE  
QUESTIONS...

...WELL, LET'S  
SEE HOW  
WELL YOU  
REALLY KNOW  
THE WORLD.

WHO RULES  
UNDER THE  
EARTH?

NIBELUNGS  
OF ALL KINDS  
SWARM THE  
UNDERGROUND  
REALM.

THE  
CRUEL  
FAFNIR  
IS THEIR  
KING.

BUT NOW HIS  
CRYSTAL CITY IS  
FALLEN, ITS PEOPLE  
SCATTERED, AND  
HE RULES ALONE  
IN THE DEPTHS OF  
THE EARTH.

HAVE I  
SPOKEN  
TRUE?

YOU KNOW  
WELL THE  
PEOPLE OF THE  
UNDERWORLD.  
NOW TELL MIMÉ  
ABOUT THE  
SURFACE. WHO  
RULES BENEATH  
THE SKIES?

THE  
EARTHLY  
REALM IS  
MUCH  
DIVIDED.

POWERFUL  
GIANTS  
FASHIONED IT  
AND THINK  
THEMSELVES ITS  
MASTERS...

...COUNTLESS  
CREATURES  
HAUNT ITS  
RIVERS AND  
WOODS.

AND FAR,  
FAR AWAY...  
DWELL THE  
PEOPLE  
OF MAN.

HAVE I  
SPOKEN  
TRUE?

YOU KNOW  
WELL THE  
DEALINGS  
OF THE  
SURFACE.

NOW, BEFORE  
LEAVING MIMÉ IN  
PEACE, ANSWER  
HIM THIS... WHO  
RULES SUPREME  
IN THE HEAVENS,  
THE DOME OF  
THE WORLD?

THERE  
IS BUT ONE  
ANSWER  
TO YOUR  
QUESTION.

THE  
IMMORTAL  
GODS. EVERY  
LIVING CREATURE  
KNOWS AND  
FEARS THEIR  
POWER...

...ALL  
SAVE ONE.  
A BOY.  
FOR SUCH WAS  
HIS MOTHER'S  
LAST WISH...

...AND SO  
MIMÉ RAISED  
SIEGFRIED IN  
IGNORANCE  
OF THE  
GODS!

odin





I HAVE  
SPOKEN  
TRUE.

I HAVE  
REDEEMED  
MYSELF,  
BLACKSMITH.  
NOW IT IS  
YOUR TURN.

HAVE  
PITY ON  
MIME!

MISERABLE,  
PRESUMPTUOUS  
MIME!

IT WAS  
ONLY A  
GAME!

AND  
IT IS NOT  
OVER. YOU  
WILL HEAR MY  
QUESTIONS.

HAVE  
PITY!

THE  
FOREST IS  
NOT YOUR  
HOME.

YOUR  
PEOPLE LEFT  
THE CAVERNS  
WHERE THEY  
ONCE DWELT.

TELL ME,  
NIBELUNG,  
WHY IT IS  
THEY FLED.



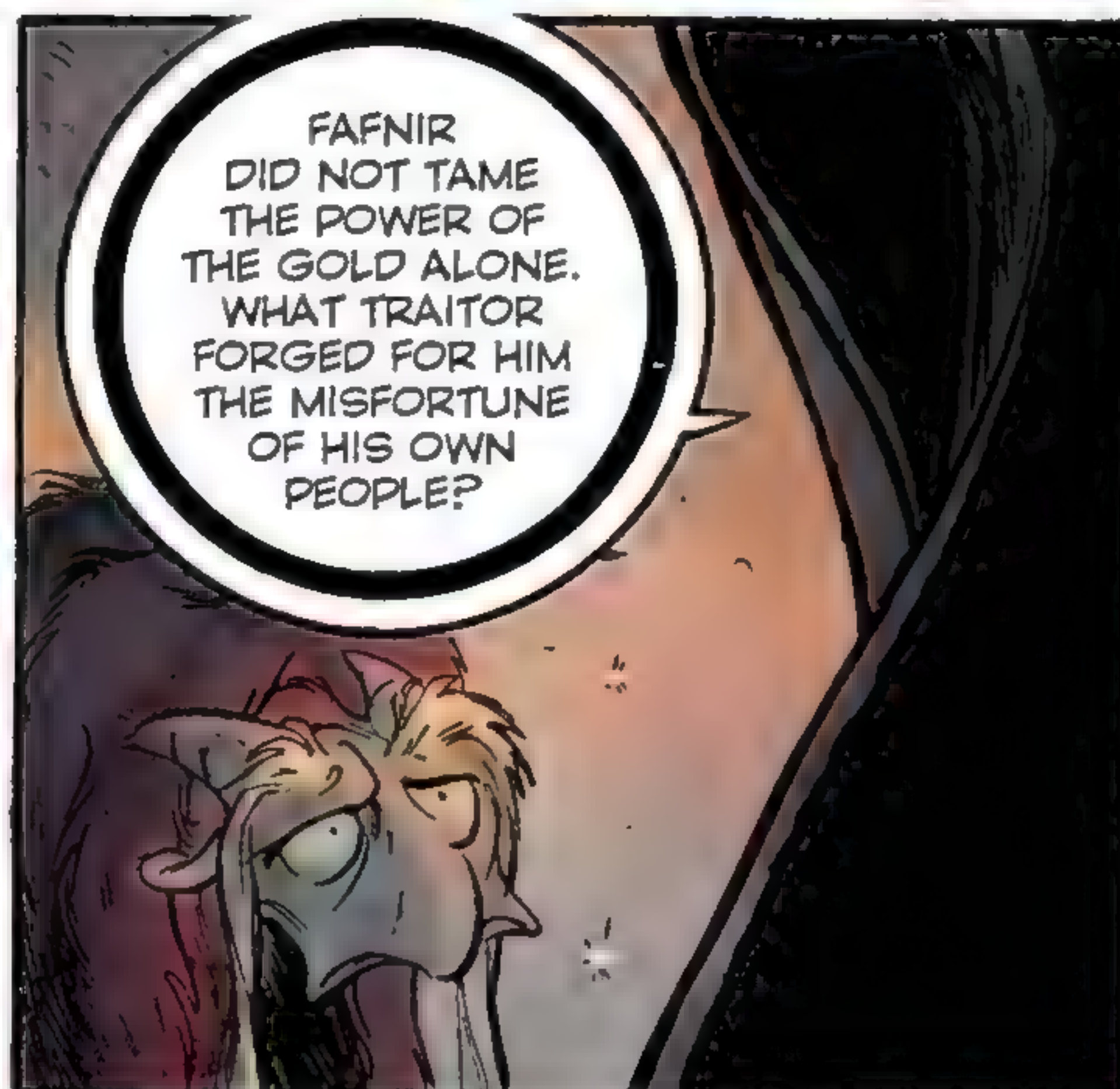
IT WAS THE  
ACCURSED  
FAFNIR!

HE BROUGHT DOOM ON  
NIBELHEIM! A METAL AS  
BRIGHT AS THE SUN...  
WHEN HE HELD IT,  
HE WAS ALL-KNOWING.  
HE DID **TERRIBLE** THINGS.

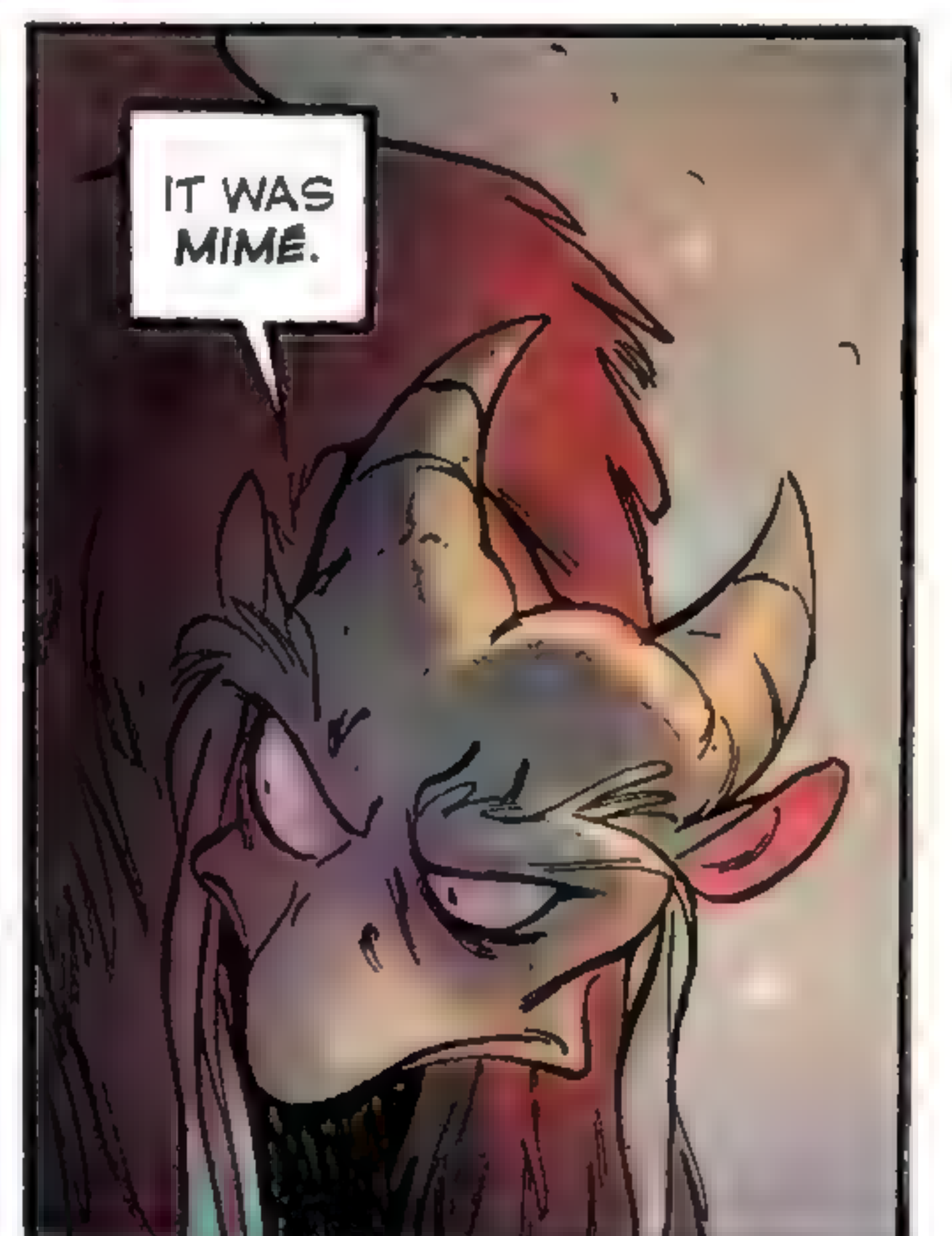


N-NOW, MIME  
SPOKE TRUE!  
HE SAVED  
H-HIS  
HEAD!

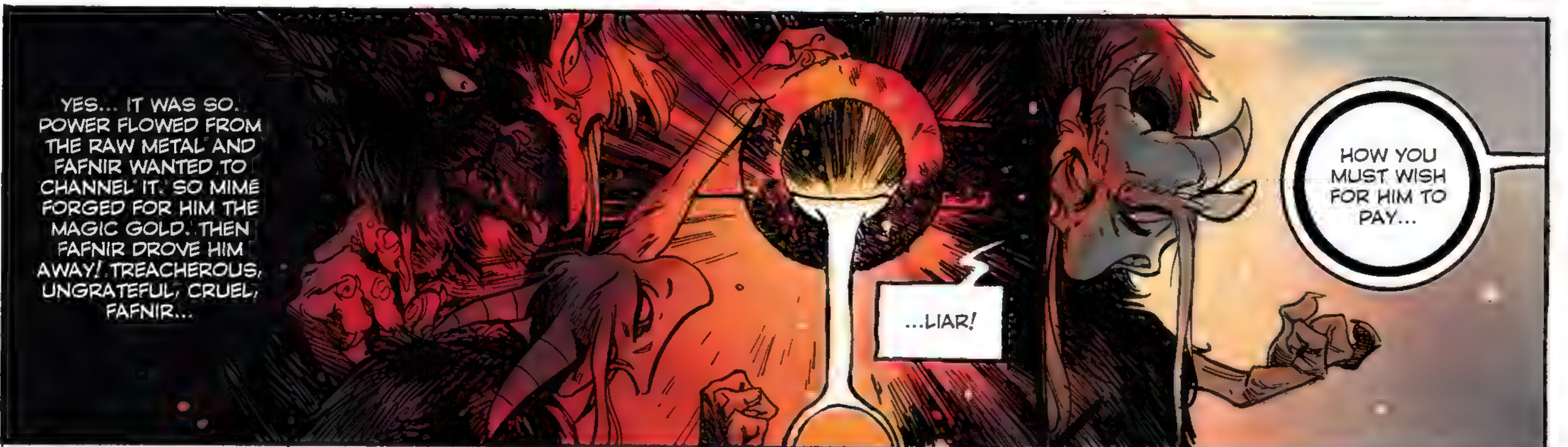
HEAR MY  
SECOND  
QUESTION!



FAFNIR  
DID NOT TAME  
THE POWER OF  
THE GOLD ALONE.  
WHAT TRAITOR  
FORGED FOR HIM  
THE MISFORTUNE  
OF HIS OWN  
PEOPLE?



IT WAS  
MIME.



YES... IT WAS SO.  
POWER FLOWED FROM  
THE RAW METAL AND  
FAFNIR WANTED TO  
CHANNEL IT. SO MIME  
FORGED FOR HIM THE  
MAGIC GOLD. THEN  
FAFNIR DROVE HIM  
AWAY! TREACHEROUS,  
UNGRATEFUL, CRUEL,  
FAFNIR...

...LIAR!

HOW YOU  
MUST WISH  
FOR HIM TO  
PAY...





...HEAR MY THIRD QUESTION!

FAFNIR HAS FALLEN ASLEEP ON HIS TREASURE. HIS BODY HAS CHANGED. FOG FLOWS FROM HIS NOSTRILS, HIS BREATH FREEZES EVERYTHING IT TOUCHES. HE WHO SLUMBERS IN THE ABYSS IS NO LONGER A NIBELUNG...

TELL ME, BLACKSMITH, HOW TO PERSUADE SIEGFRIED TO CHALLENGE THE DRAGON?

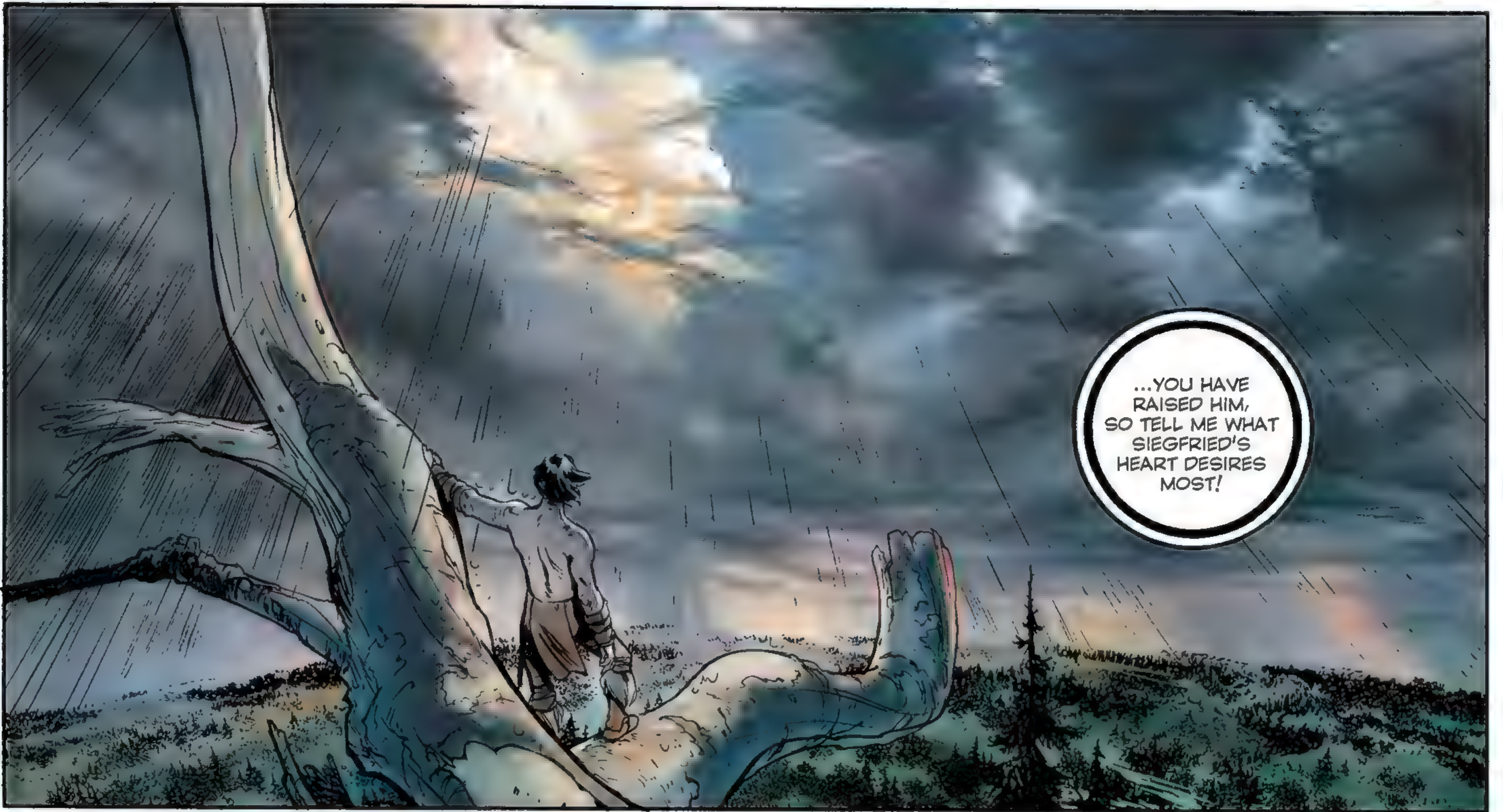


?!



THAT IS WHAT YOU SHOULD'VE ASKED ME.

I WILL GIVE YOU ONE LAST CHANCE. ONE LAST QUESTION...



...YOU HAVE RAISED HIM, SO TELL ME WHAT SIEGFRIED'S HEART DESIRES MOST!



THAT'S EASY!



MIME OFFERED HIM EVERYTHING! BUT SIEGFRIED WANTS NOTHING!



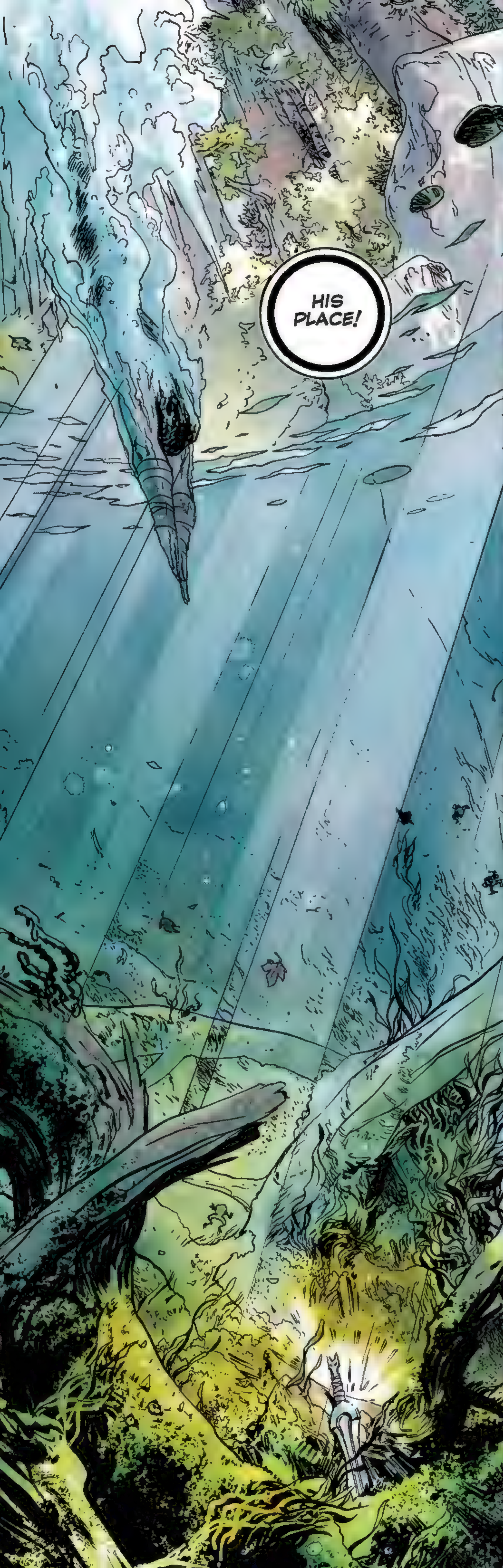
NO...



...

HE WANTS WHAT YOU HAVE KEPT FROM HIM.

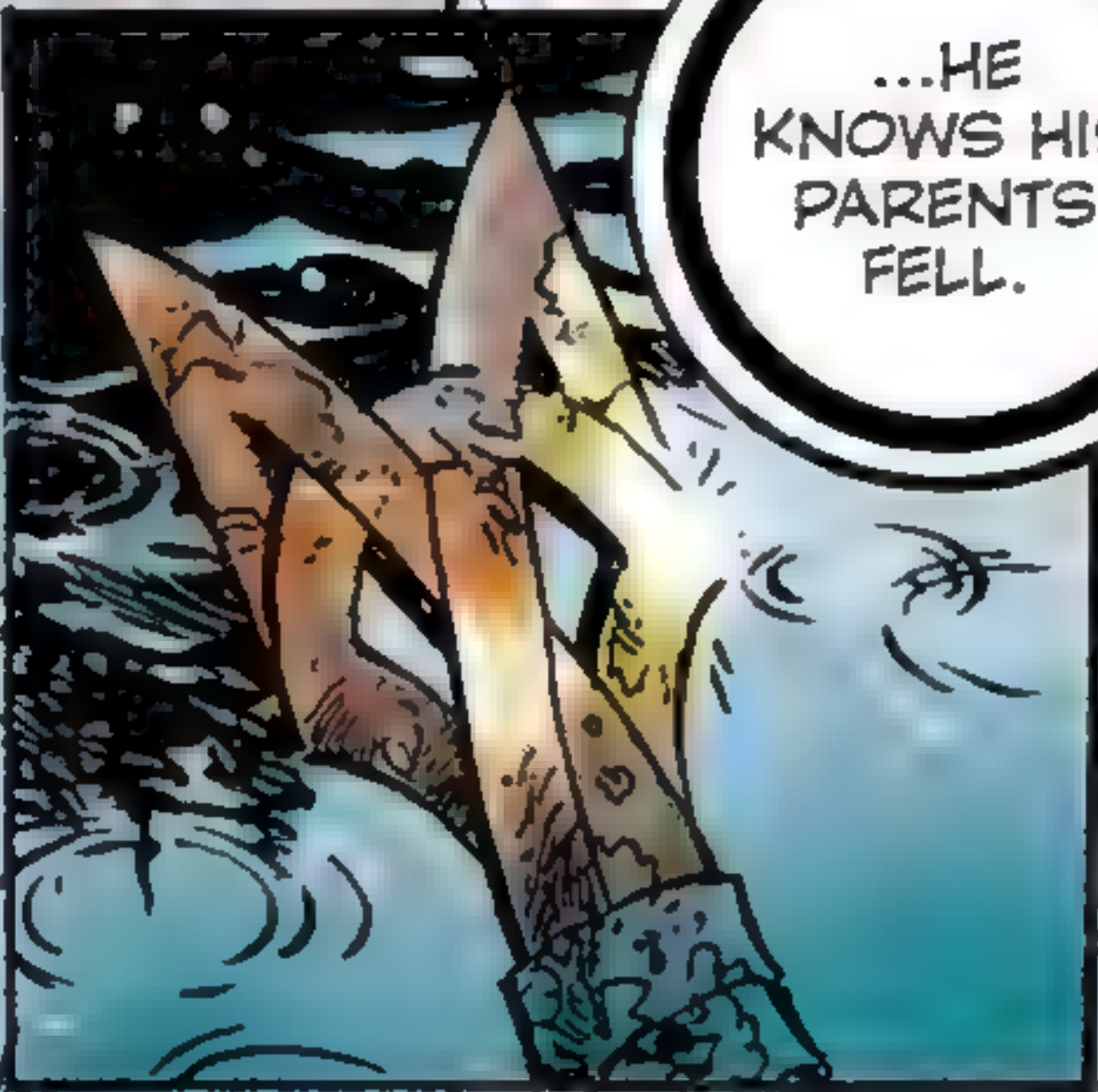




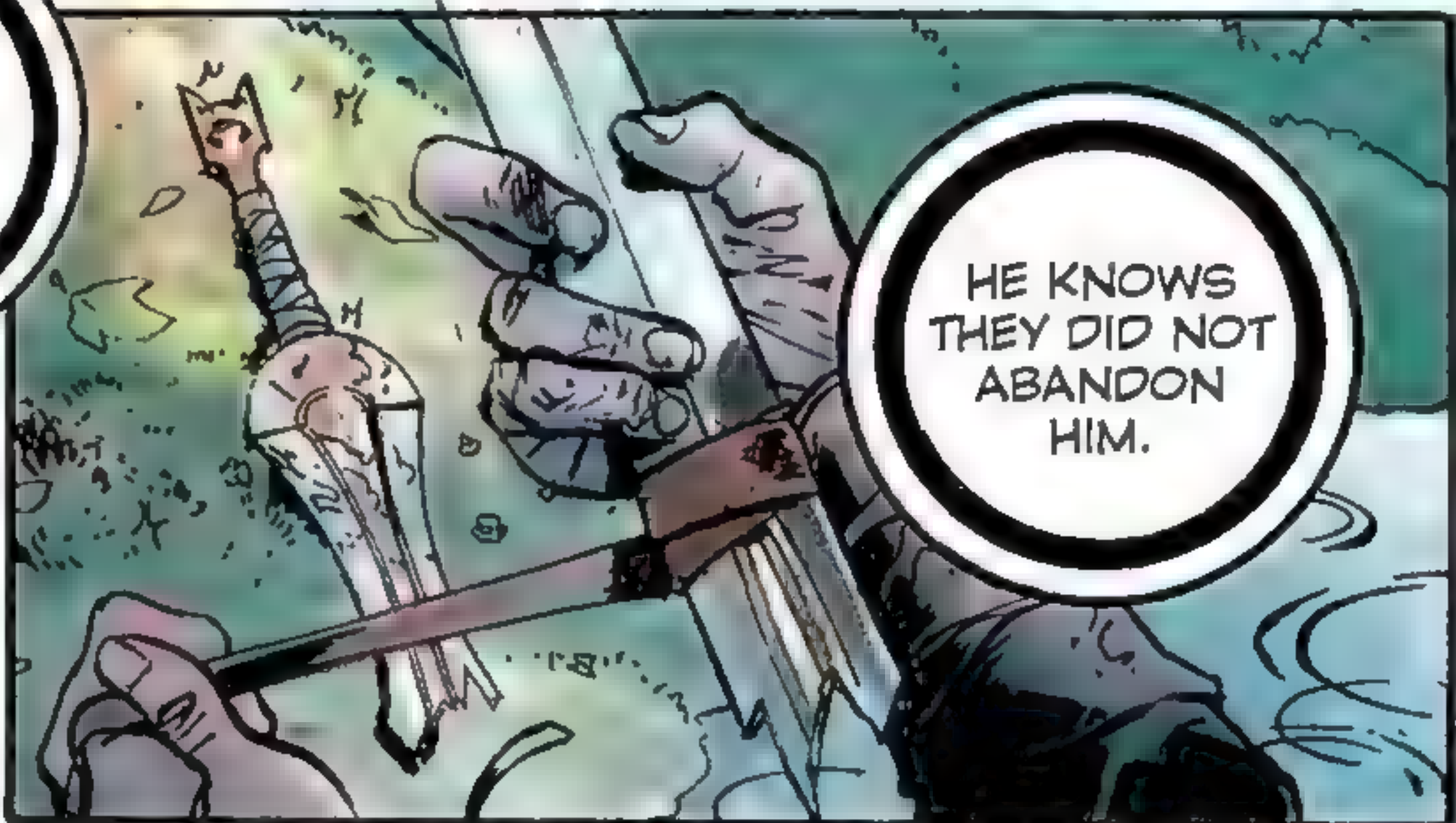
HIS  
PLACE!



AND  
AT LAST  
HE HAS  
FOUND  
IT...



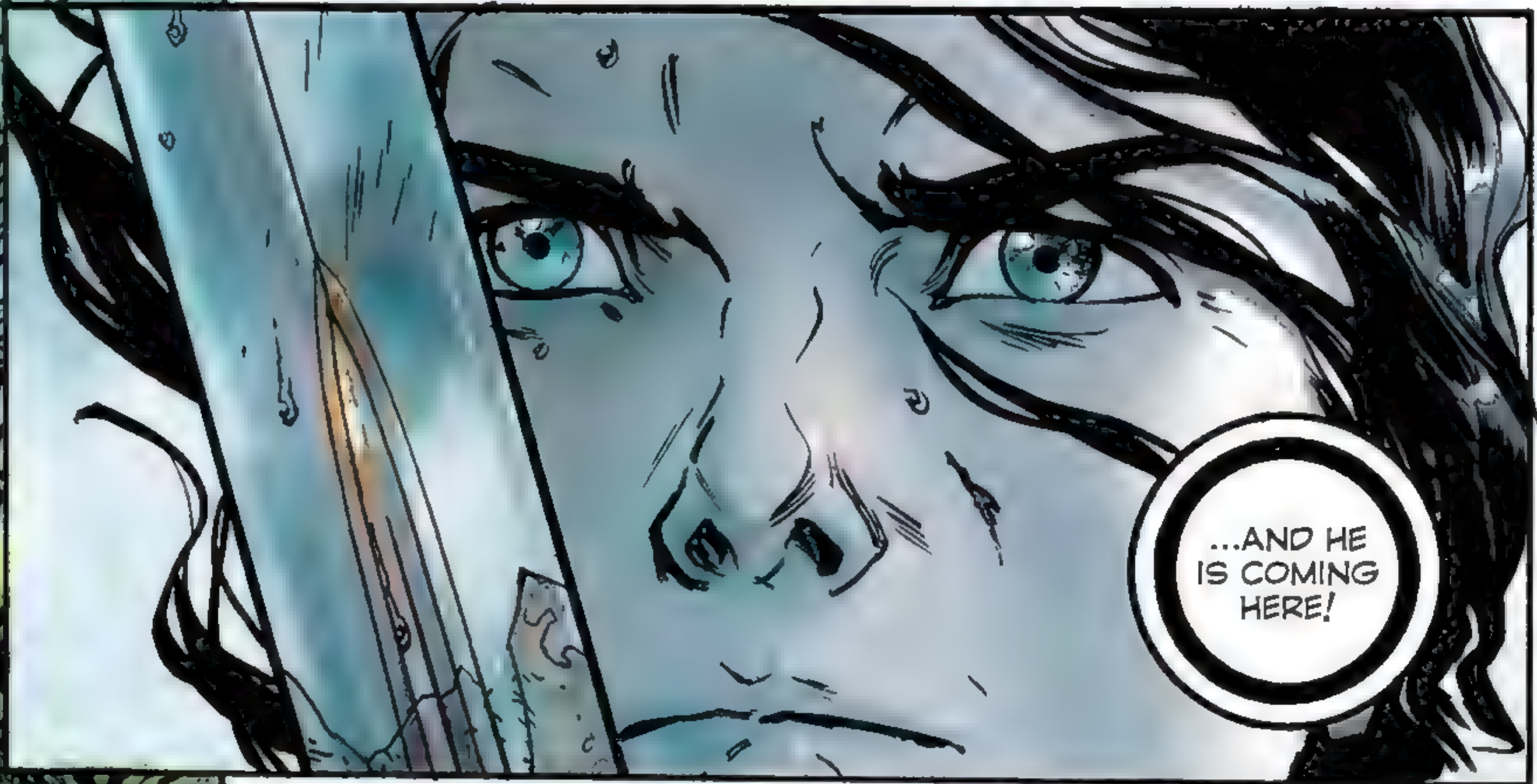
...HE  
KNOWS HIS  
PARENTS  
FELL.



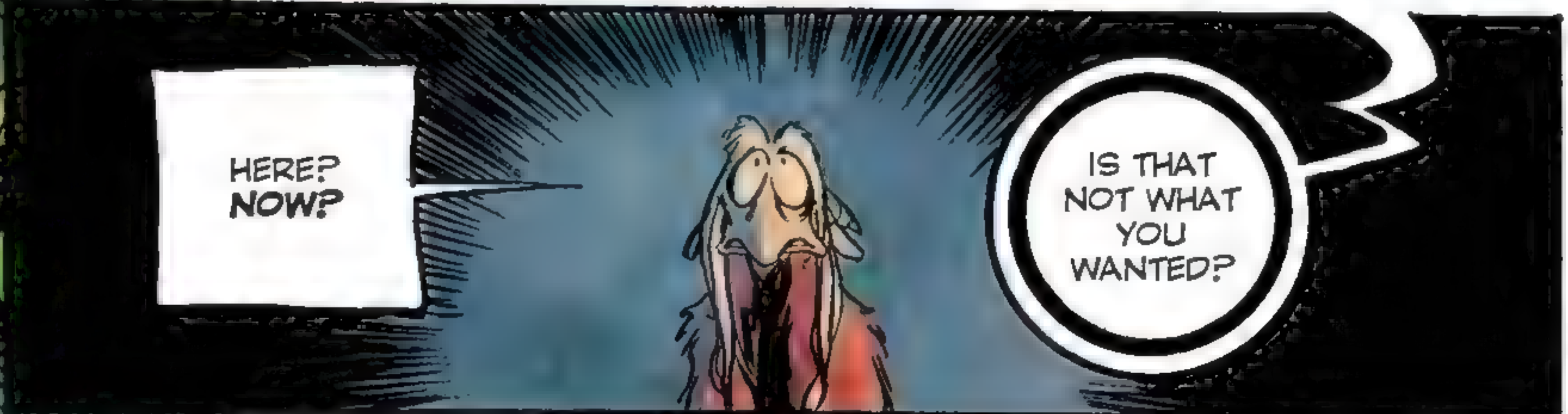
HE KNOWS  
THEY DID NOT  
ABANDON  
HIM.



HE  
KNOWS  
YOU LIED  
TO HIM...



...AND HE  
IS COMING  
HERE!



HERE?  
NOW?

IS THAT  
NOT WHAT  
YOU  
WANTED?





MIME'S  
DEAD  
MEAT!

NOT  
IF YOU  
GIVE HIM  
WHAT HE  
WANTS.

NIBELUNG-  
ON-A-  
STICK?

HIS  
PEOPLE!

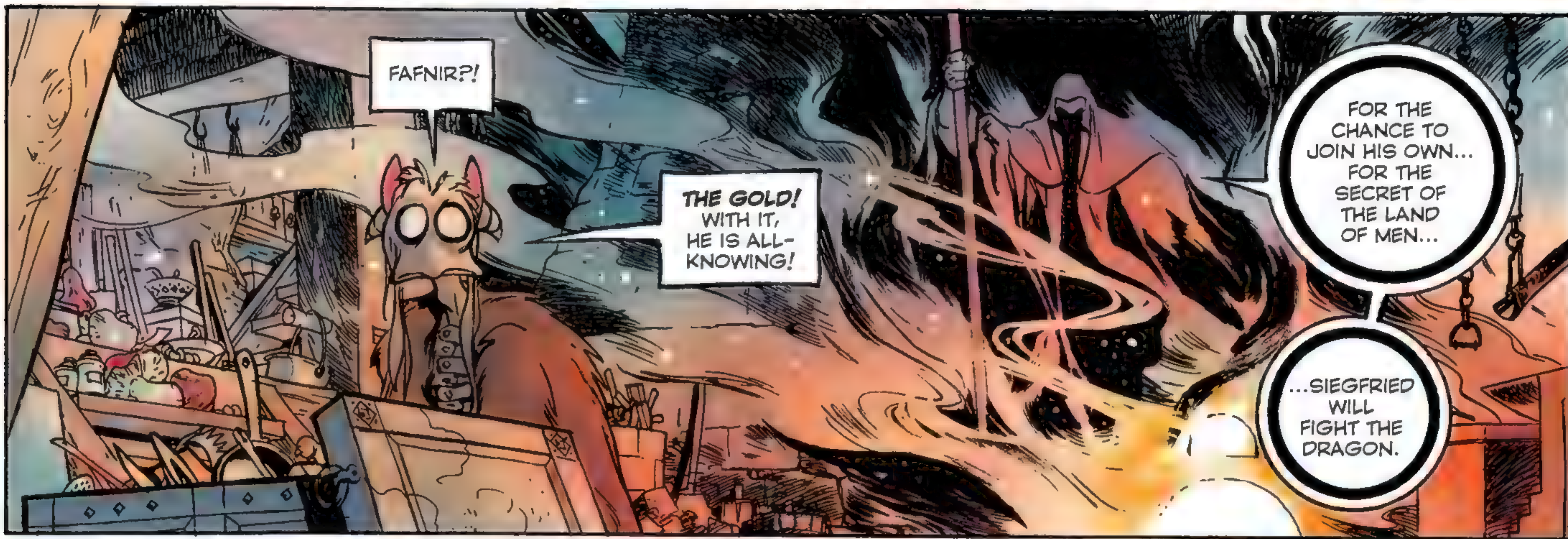
THE LAND OF  
MAN IS BUT  
A LEGEND!

IT  
EXISTS...



BUT NO ONE  
KNOWS WHERE  
IT IS!

NO ONE  
ON THE  
SURFACE OF  
THE EARTH...

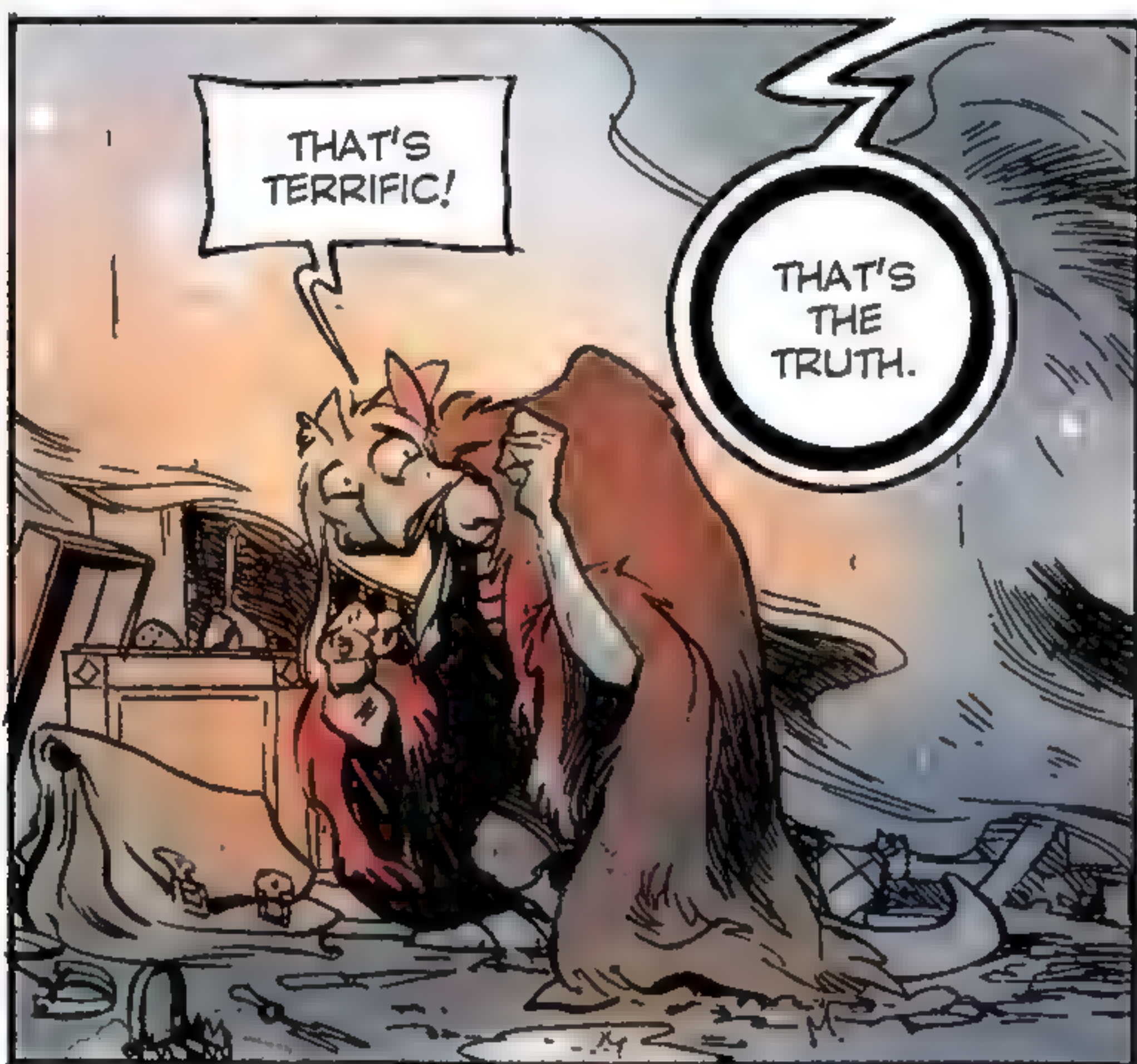


FAFNIR?!

THE GOLD!  
WITH IT,  
HE IS ALL-  
KNOWING!

FOR THE  
CHANCE TO  
JOIN HIS OWN...  
FOR THE  
SECRET OF  
THE LAND  
OF MEN...

...SIEGFRIED  
WILL  
FIGHT THE  
DRAGON.



THAT'S  
TERRIFIC!

THAT'S  
THE  
TRUTH.



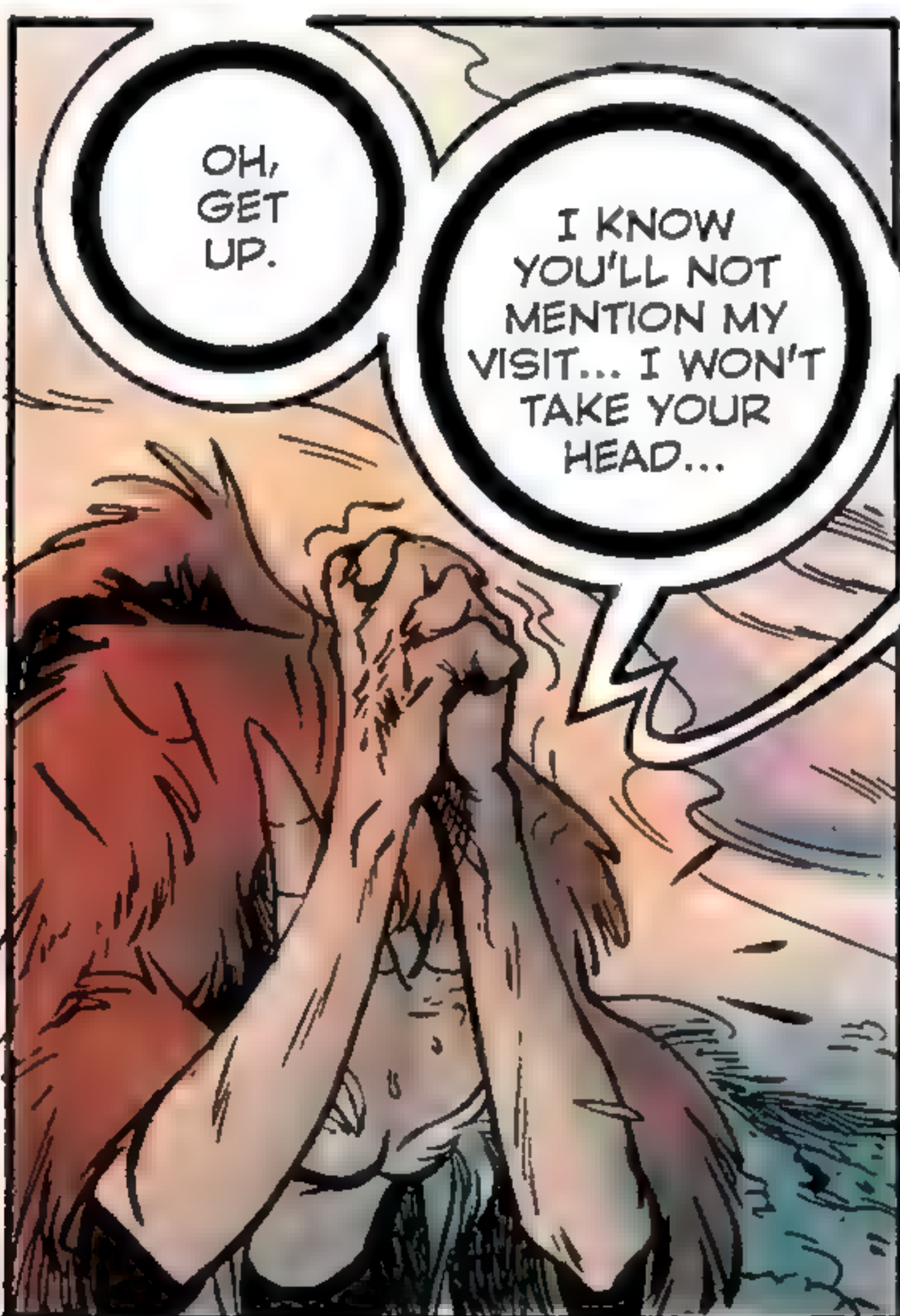
HE'LL  
NEVER  
BELIEVE  
IT!



HOW CAN I  
PERSUADE  
HIM?

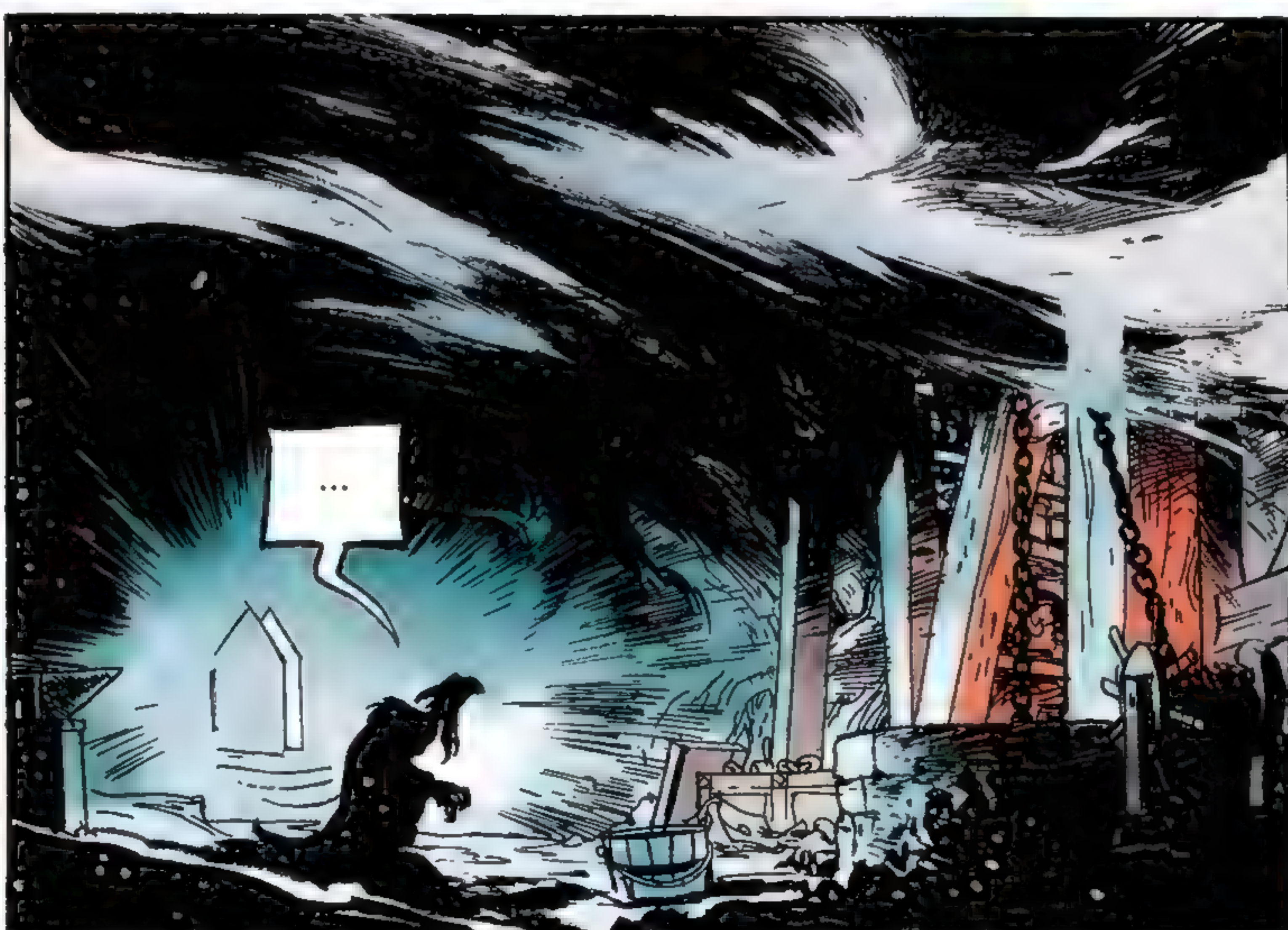
YOU'RE  
OUT OF  
QUESTIONS,  
NIBELUNG.

YOU  
LOST.



OH,  
GET  
UP.

I KNOW  
YOU'LL NOT  
MENTION MY  
VISIT... I WON'T  
TAKE YOUR  
HEAD...

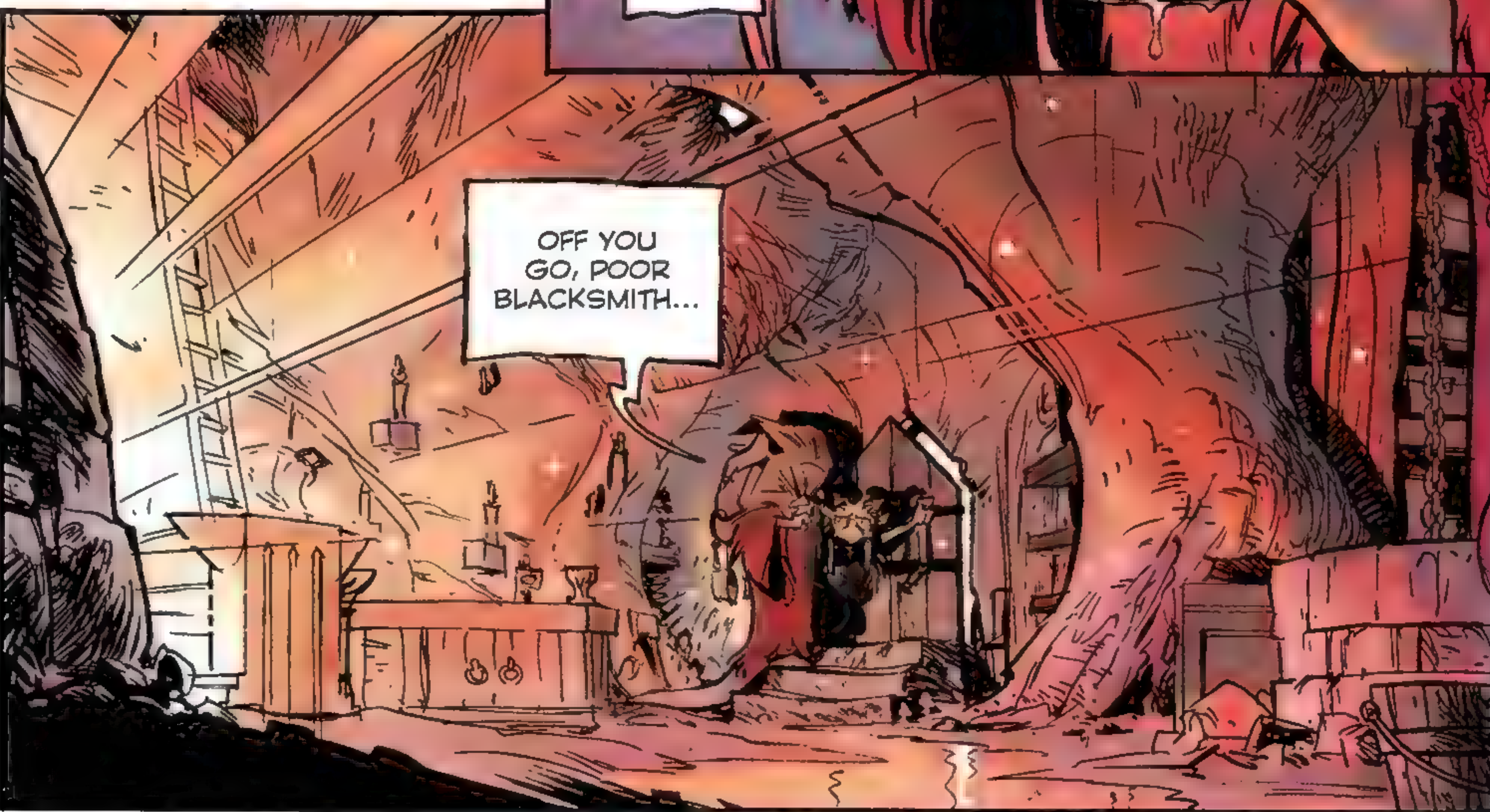
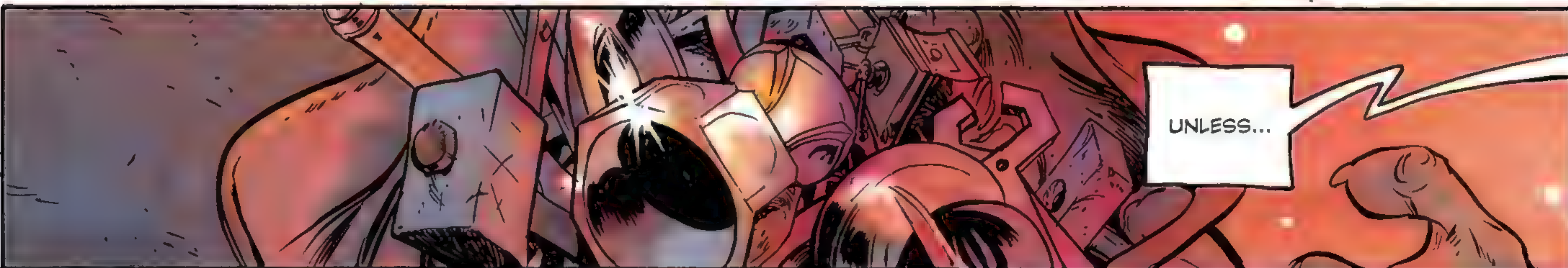
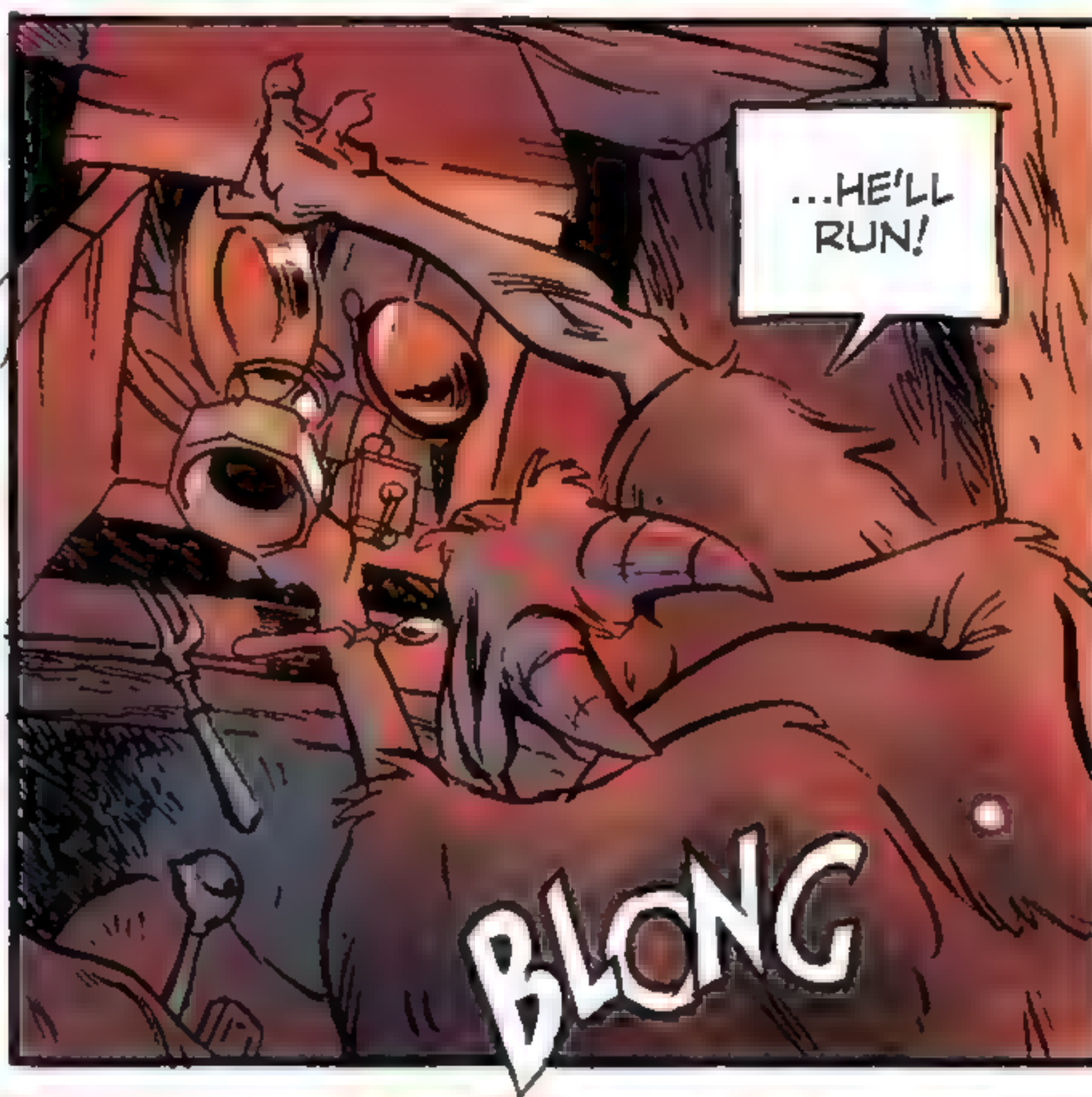
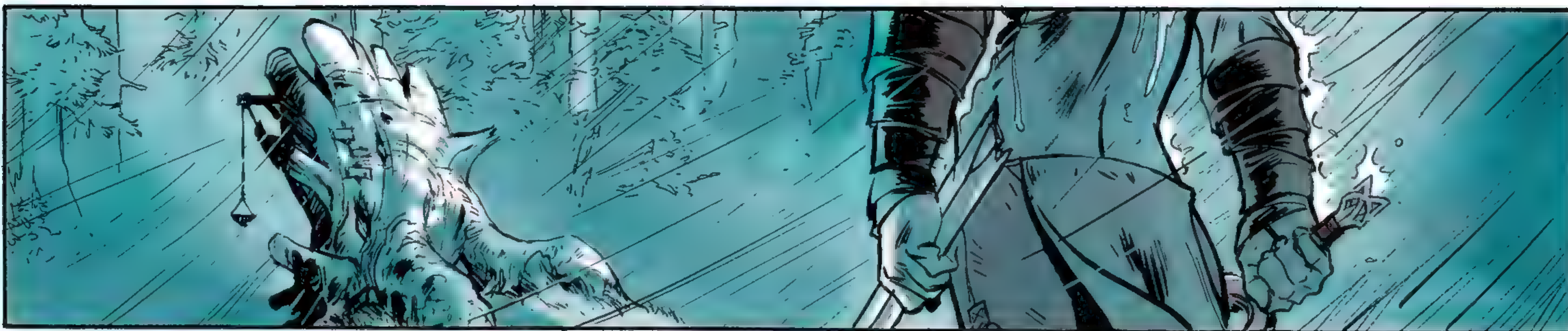


...



...I'LL LEAVE  
IT IN THE  
HANDS OF  
THE DRAGON  
SLAYER!









THIS ISN'T A  
NIBELUNG'S  
SWORD!



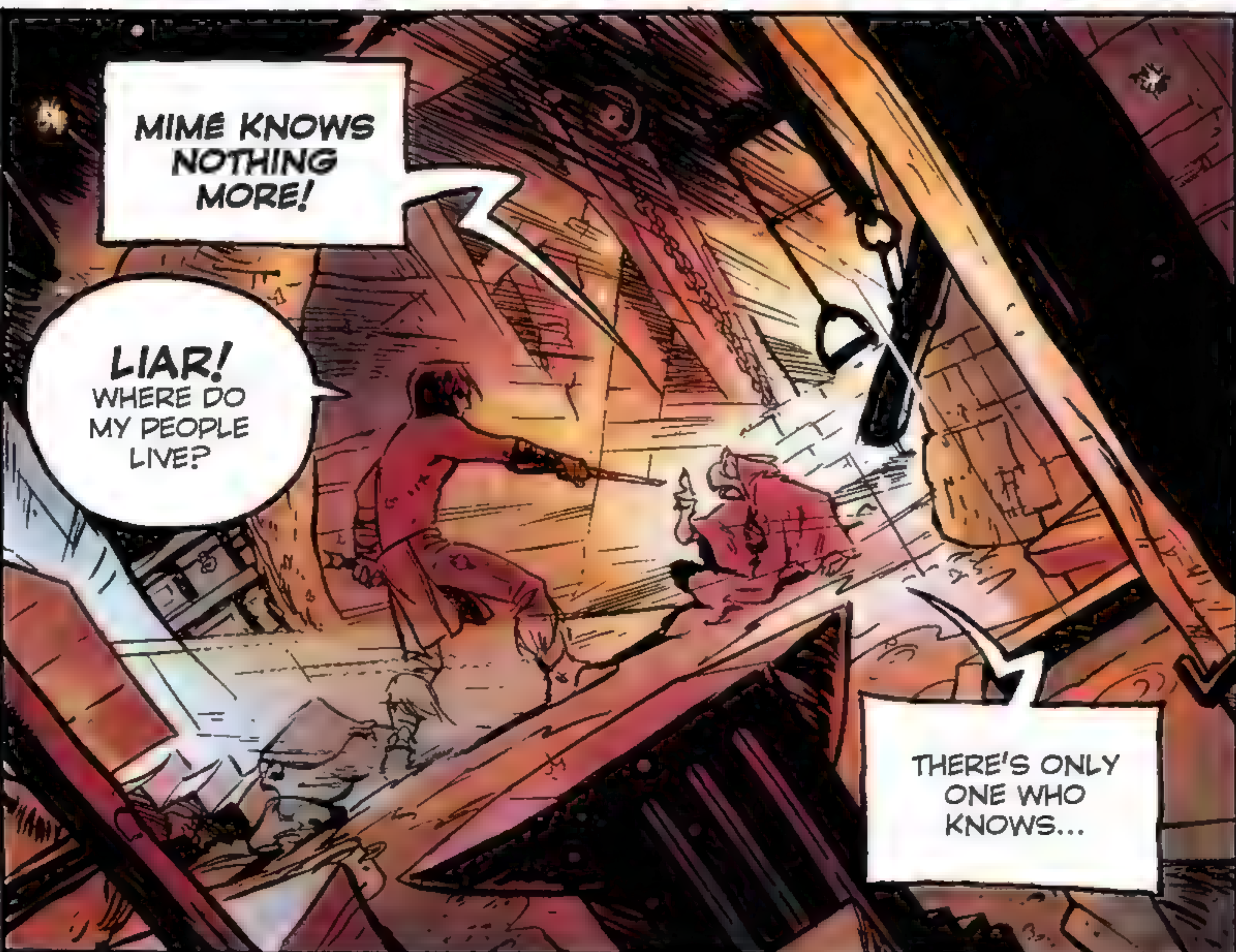
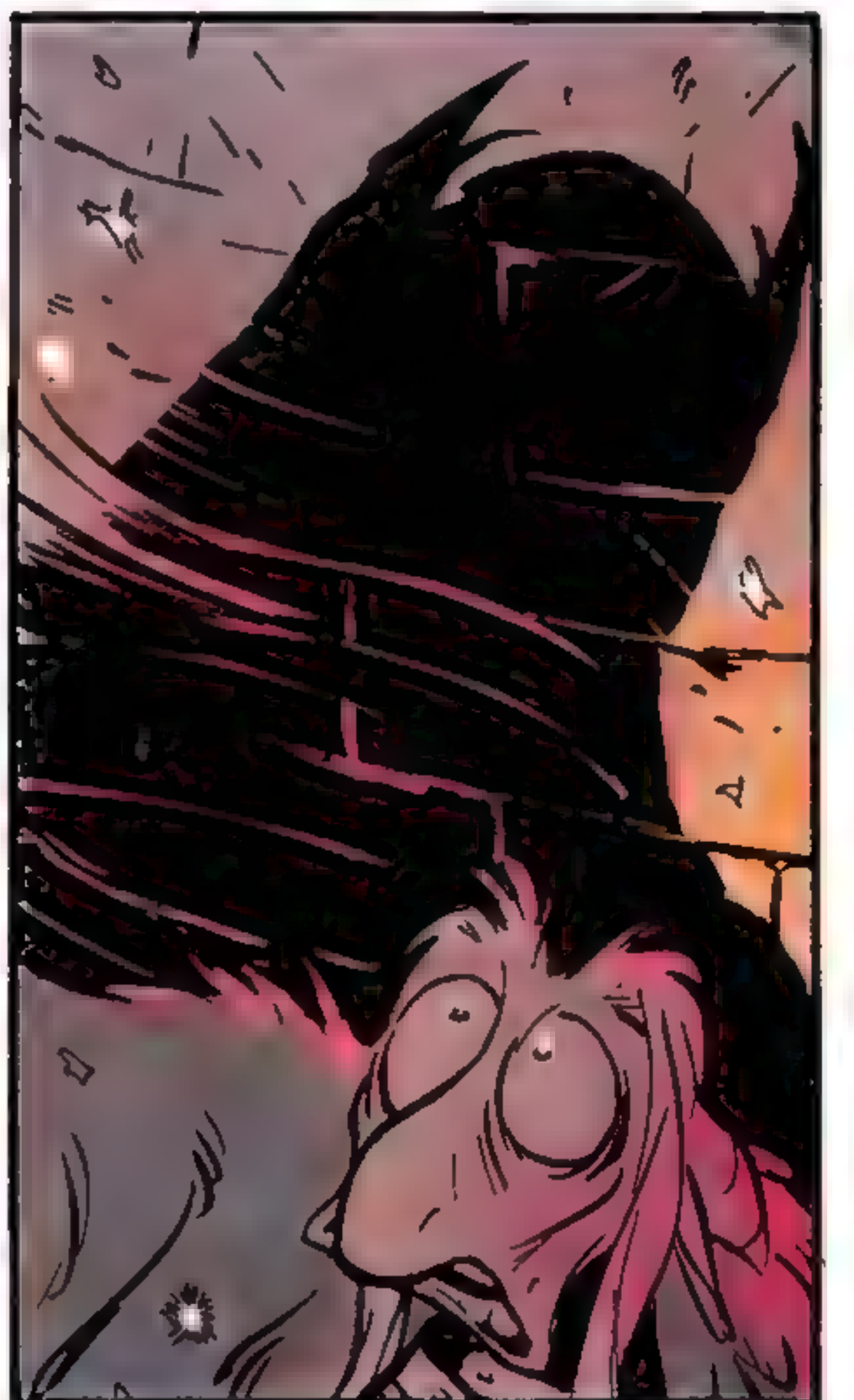
WHAT  
WERE THEY  
DOING  
HERE?

WHO  
KILLED MY  
PARENTS?

...A  
SPEAR!



WHO?



MIME KNOWS  
NOTHING  
MORE!

LIAR!  
WHERE DO  
MY PEOPLE  
LIVE?

THERE'S ONLY  
ONE WHO  
KNOWS...



SAY  
"DRAGON"  
AND I'LL CUT  
OFF YOUR  
HEAD!







YOU'RE  
GETTING OLD,  
MIMÉ.

SO  
ARE YOUR  
LIES.



IT'S TRUE! THE  
DRAGON'S BLOOD  
HOLDS KNOWLEDGE!  
KILL THE BEAST, AND  
YOU'LL FIND THE LAND  
OF MAN!

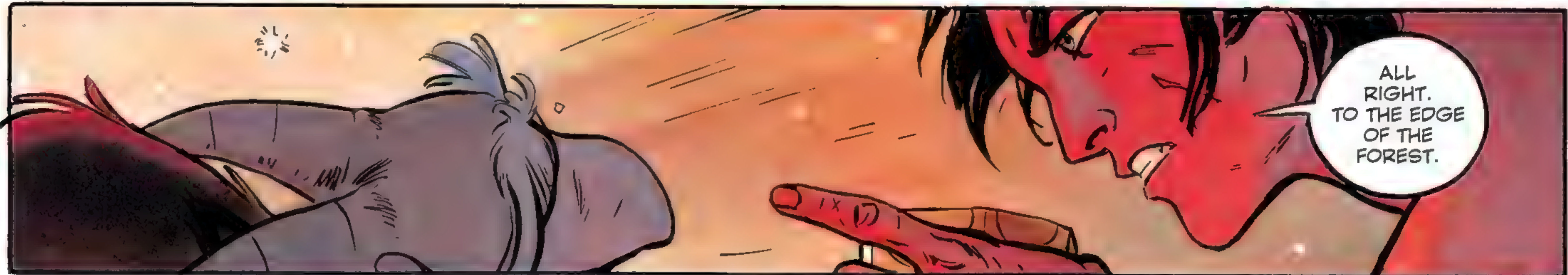
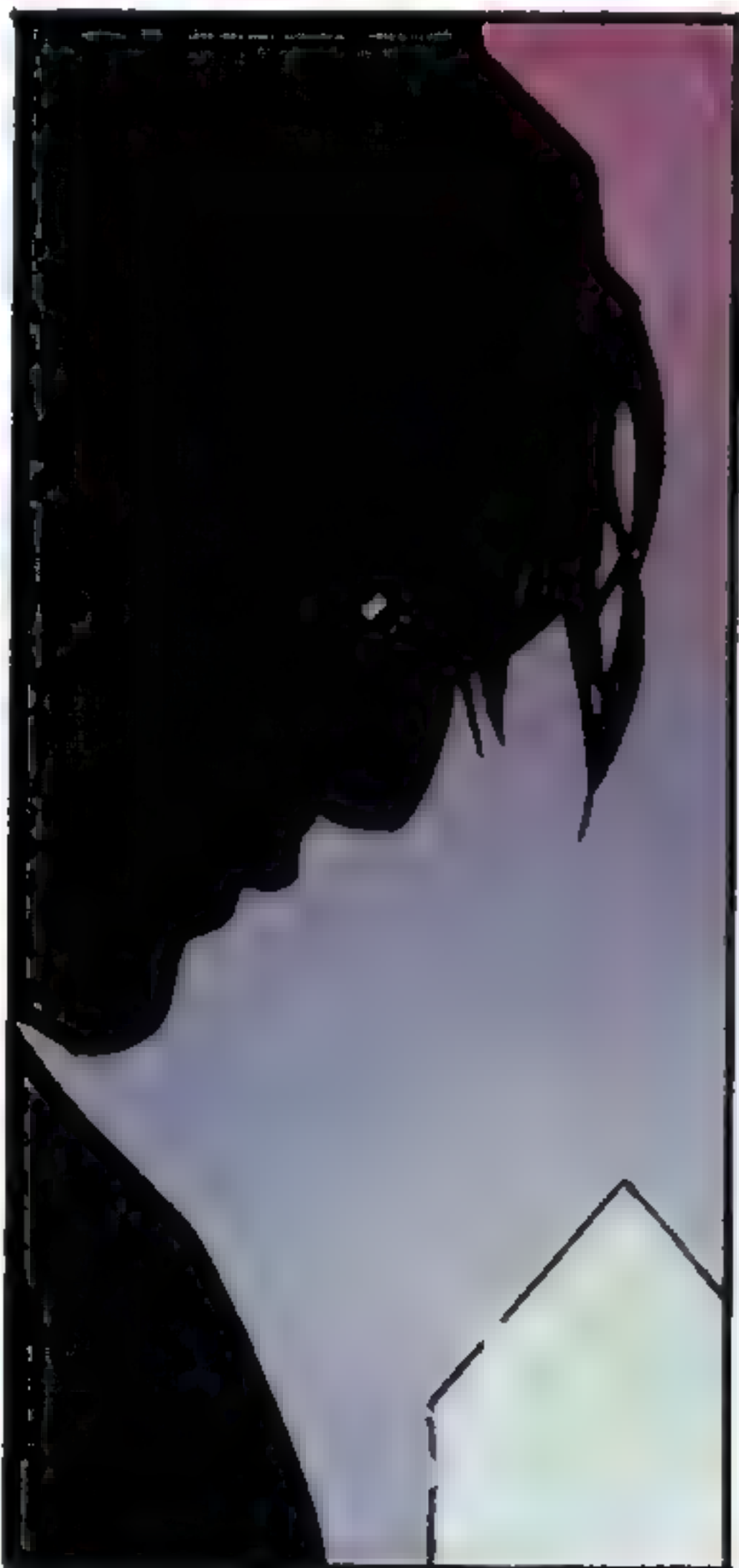
ONLY A  
CHILD WOULD  
BELIEVE  
THAT...

TRUST MIMÉ!  
HE WILL LEAD  
YOU THROUGH THESE  
WOODS AND OUT  
OF THE FORBIDDEN  
FOREST!

THEN  
YOU CAN  
GAUGE HIS  
COUNSEL.



WHAT  
OTHER GUIDE  
HAVE YOU?



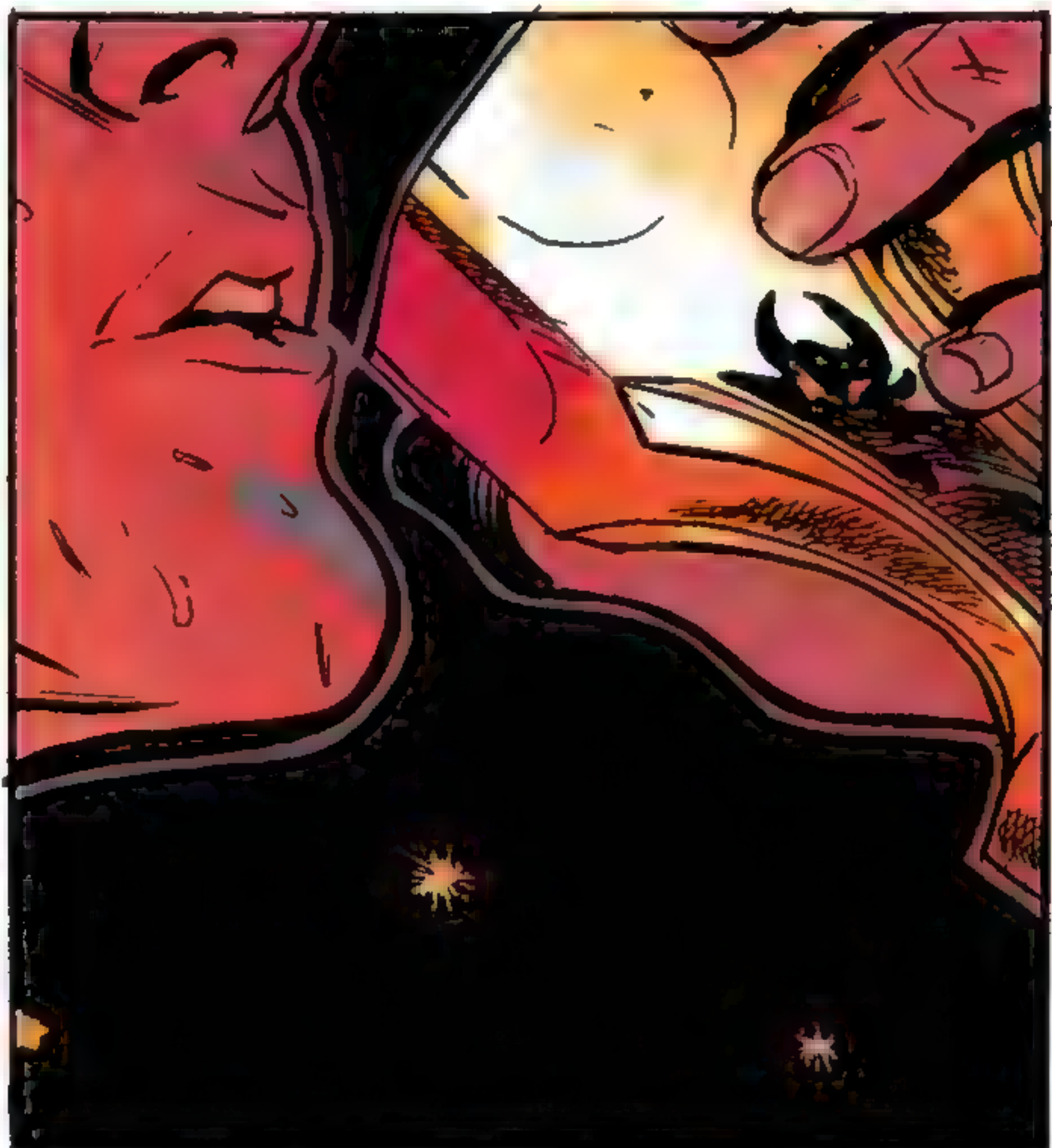
ALL  
RIGHT.  
TO THE EDGE  
OF THE  
FOREST.



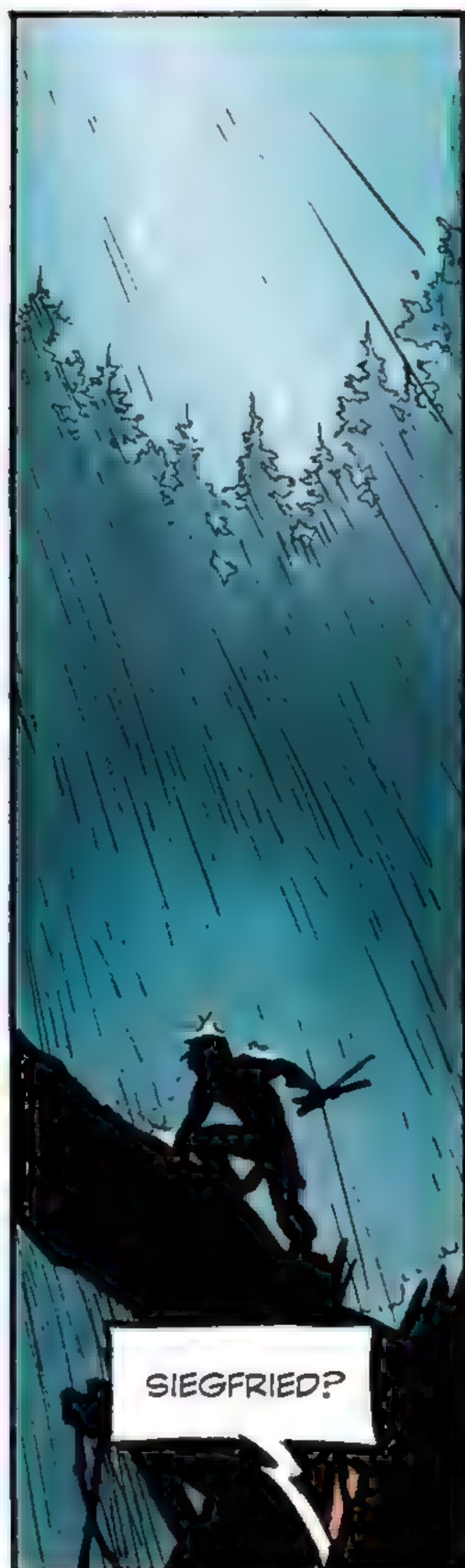
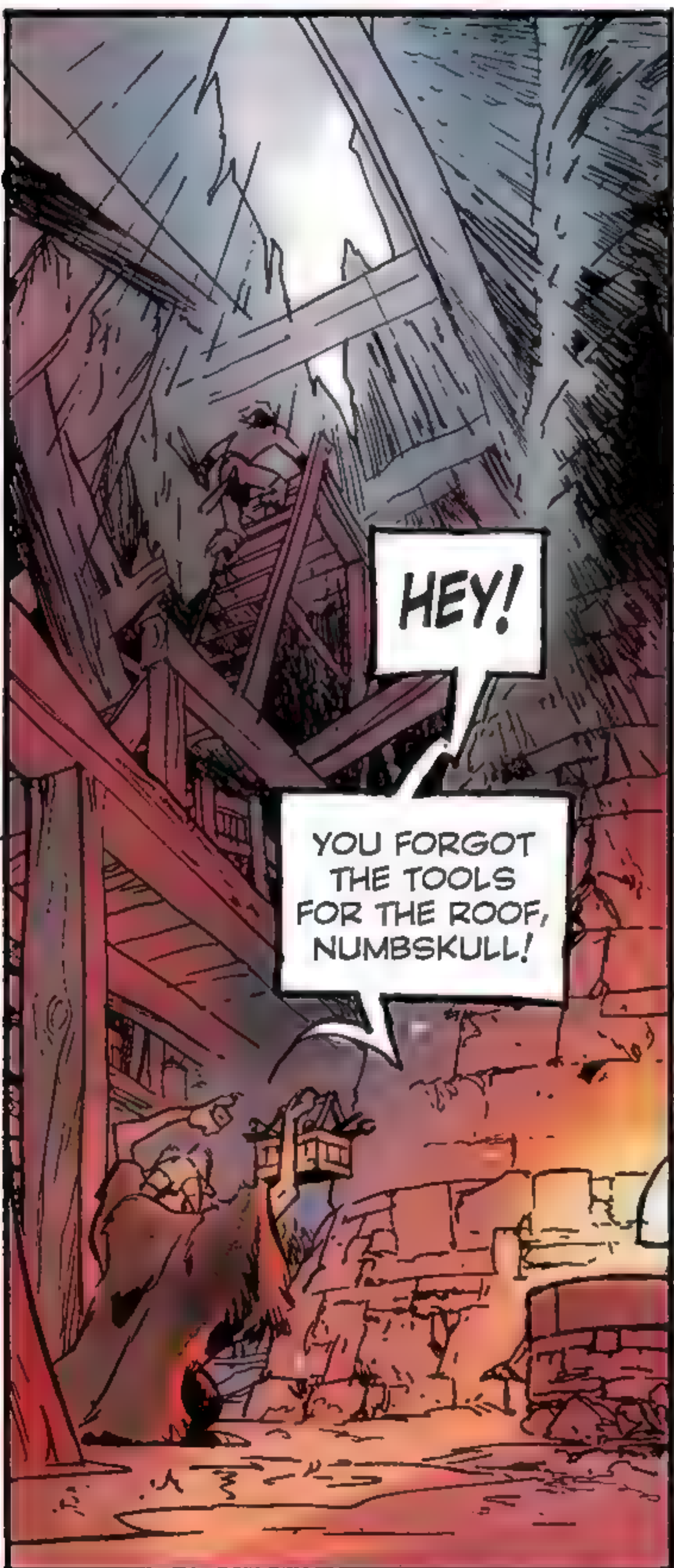
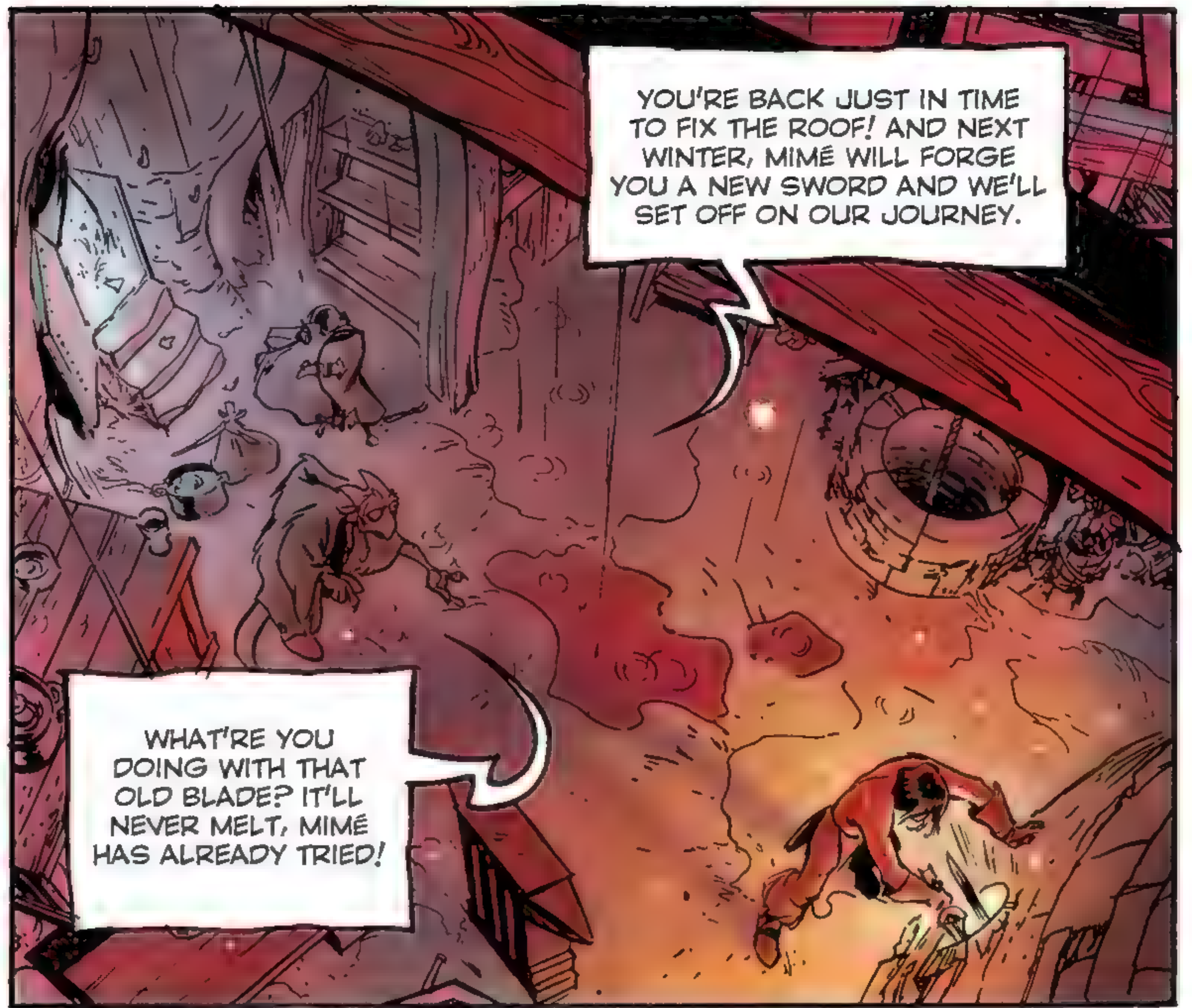
AND,  
MIMÉ?

NO,  
DON'T  
DRINK  
THAT!

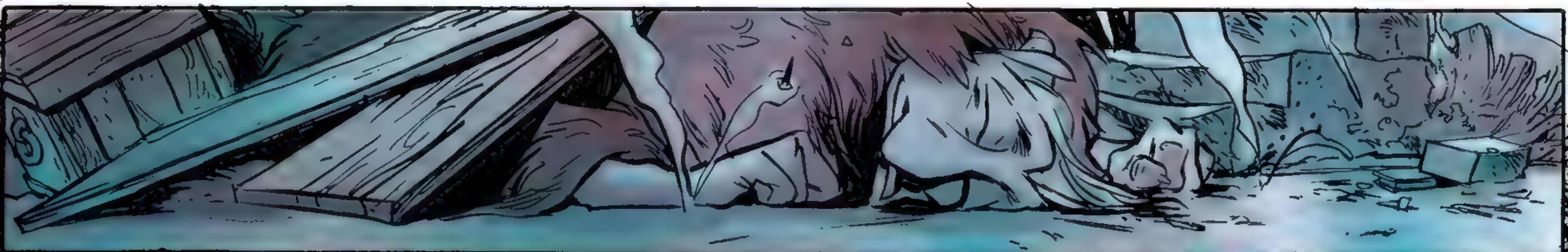
YOUR NEXT  
LIE WILL BE  
YOUR LAST.







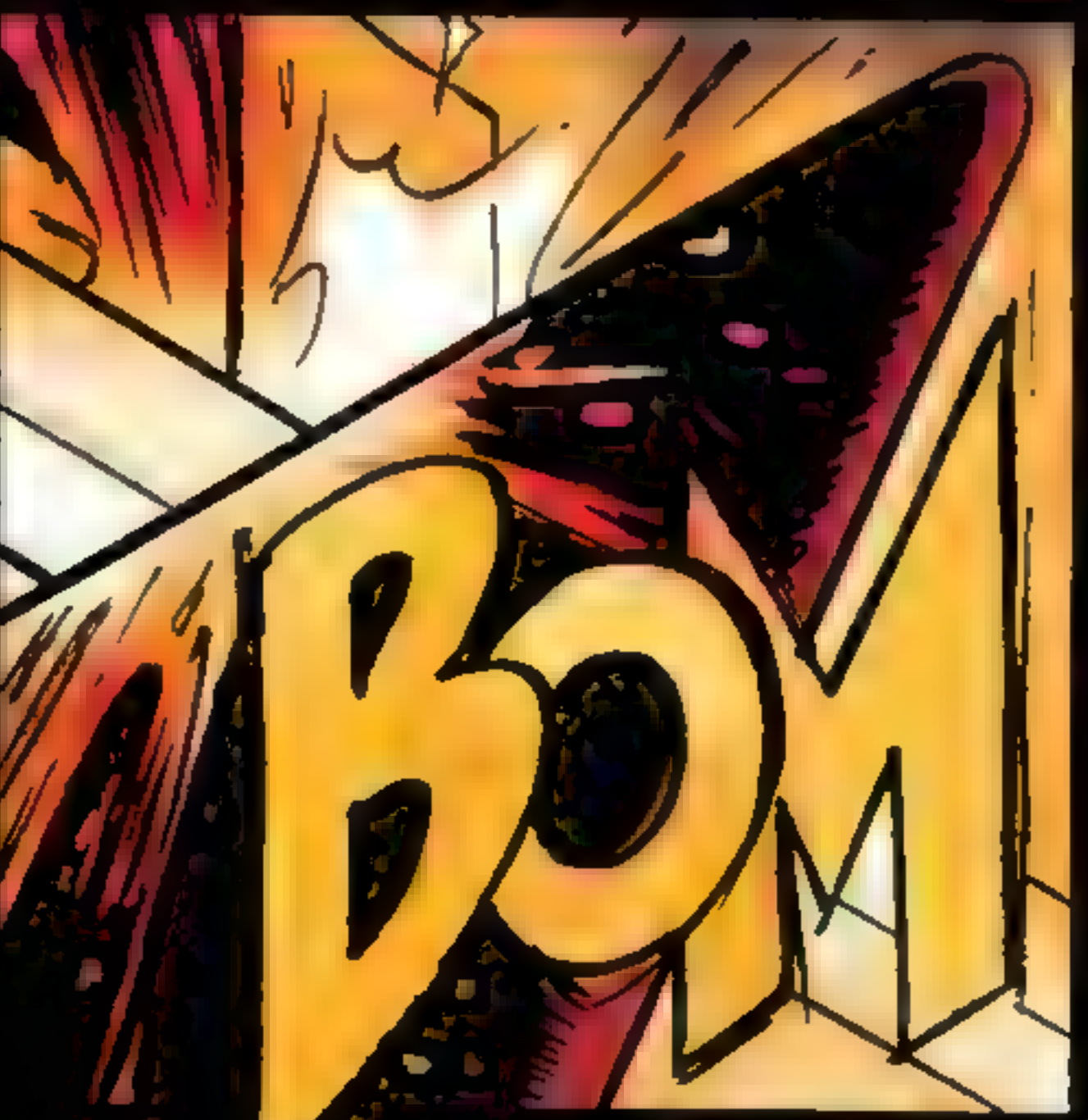
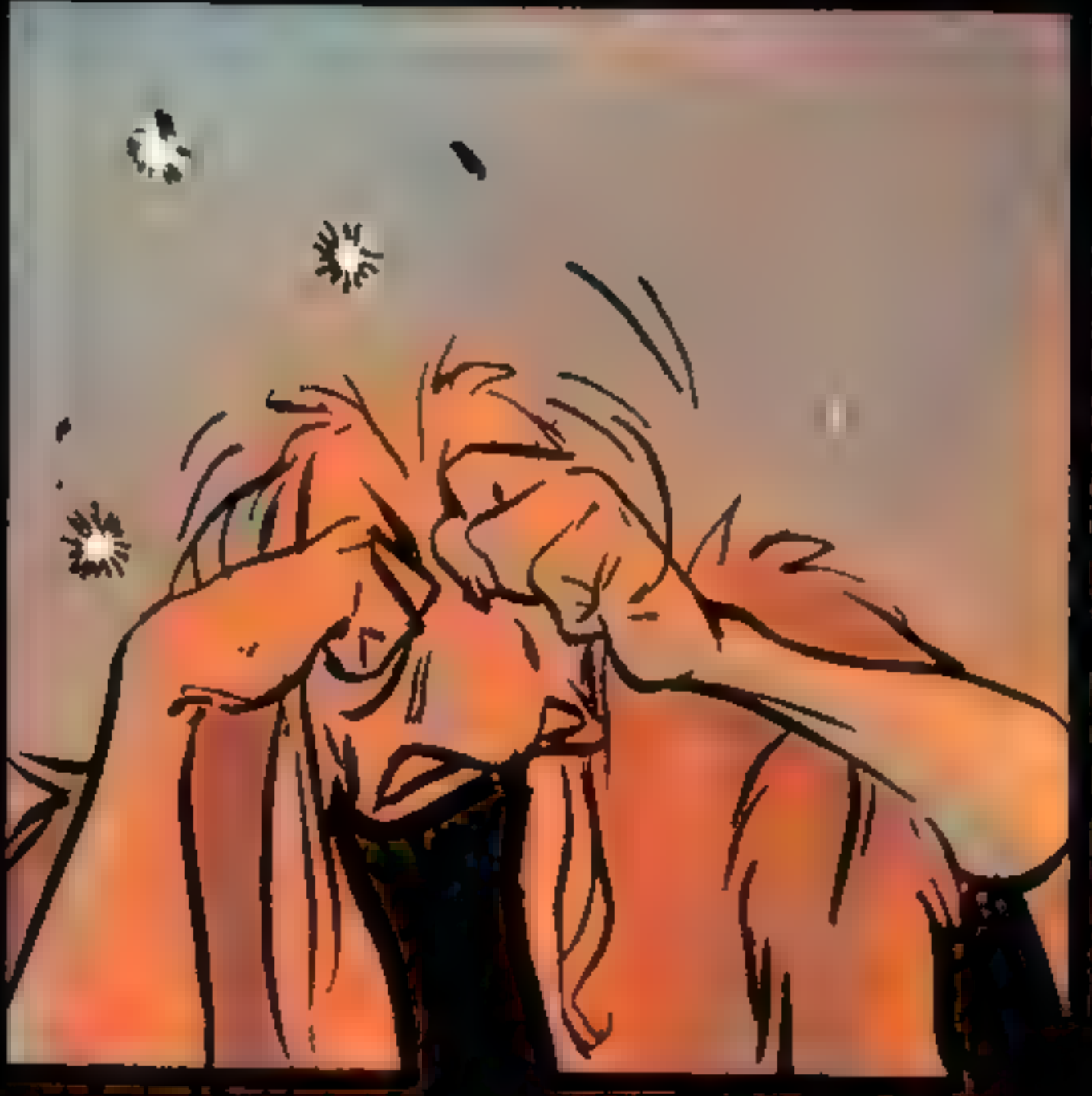
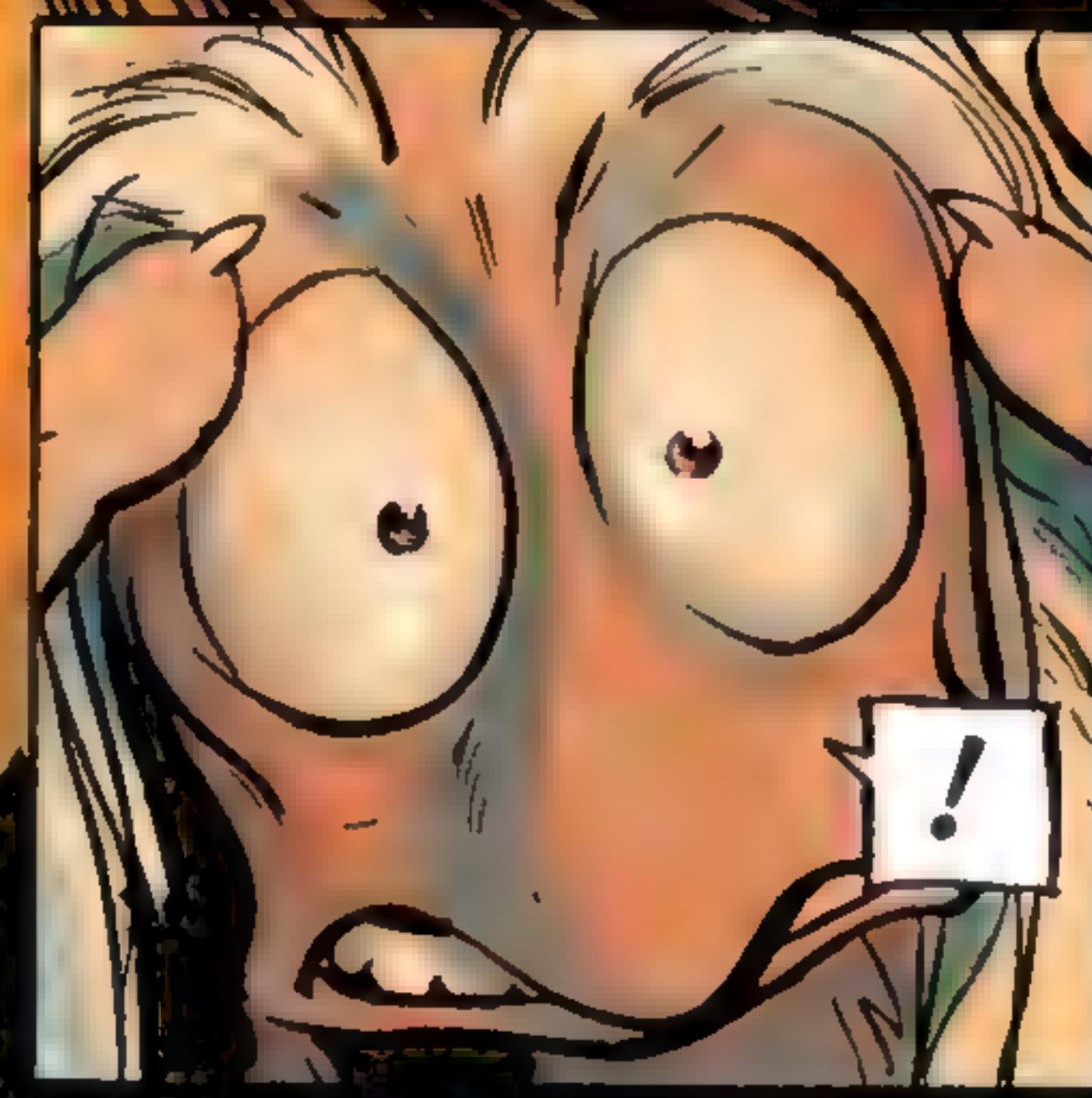
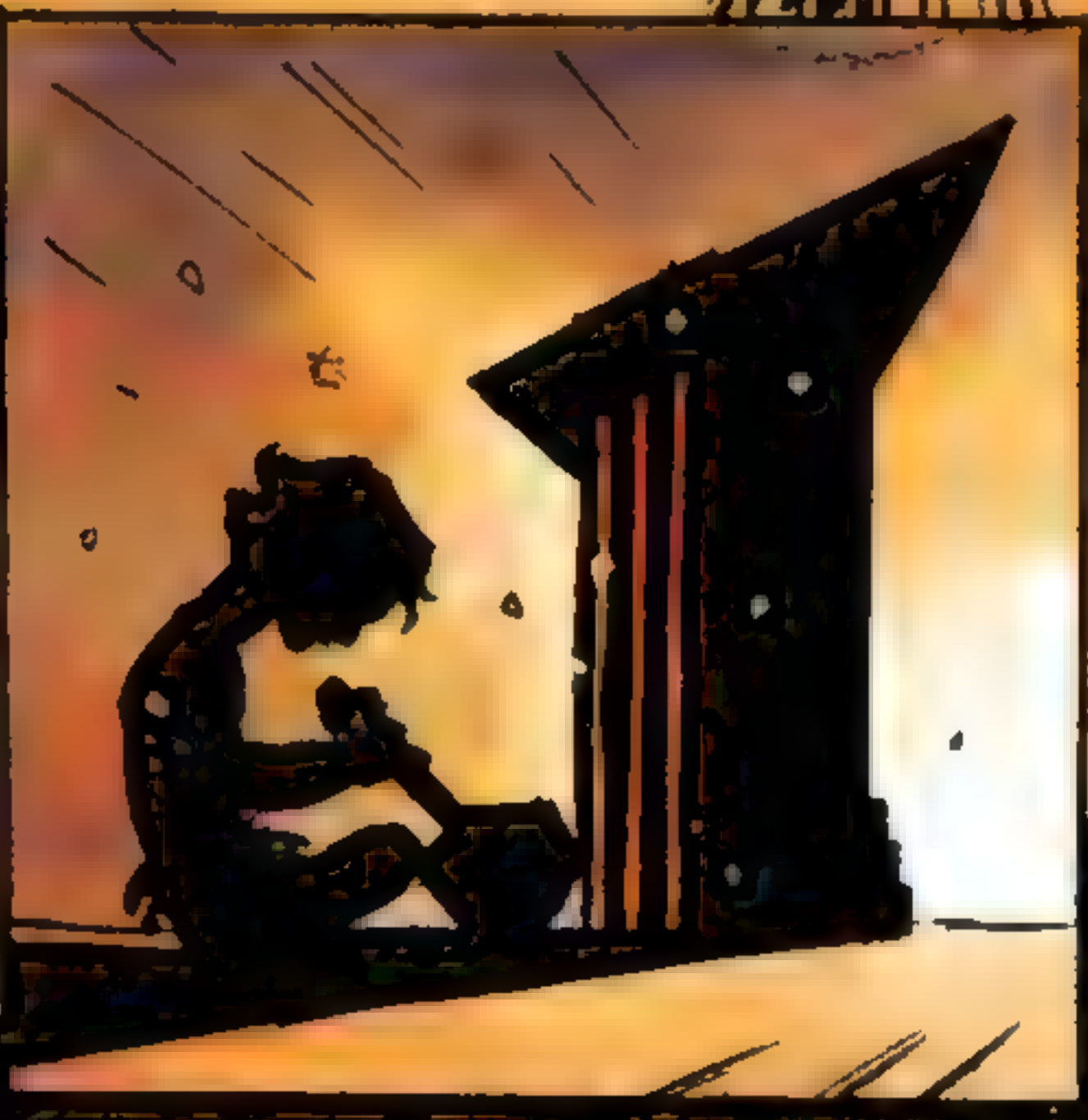
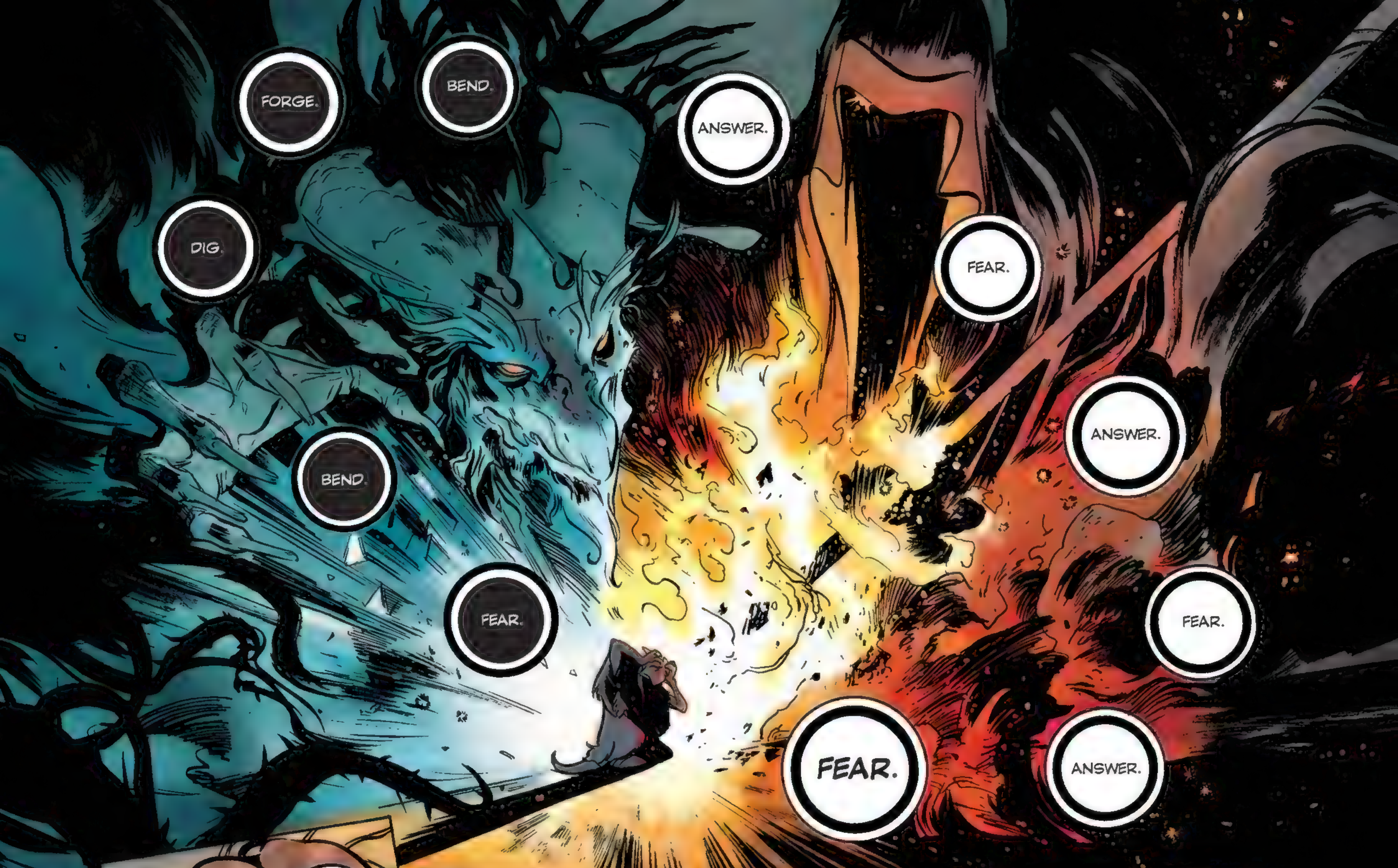




MIME?

FORGE,  
MIME!





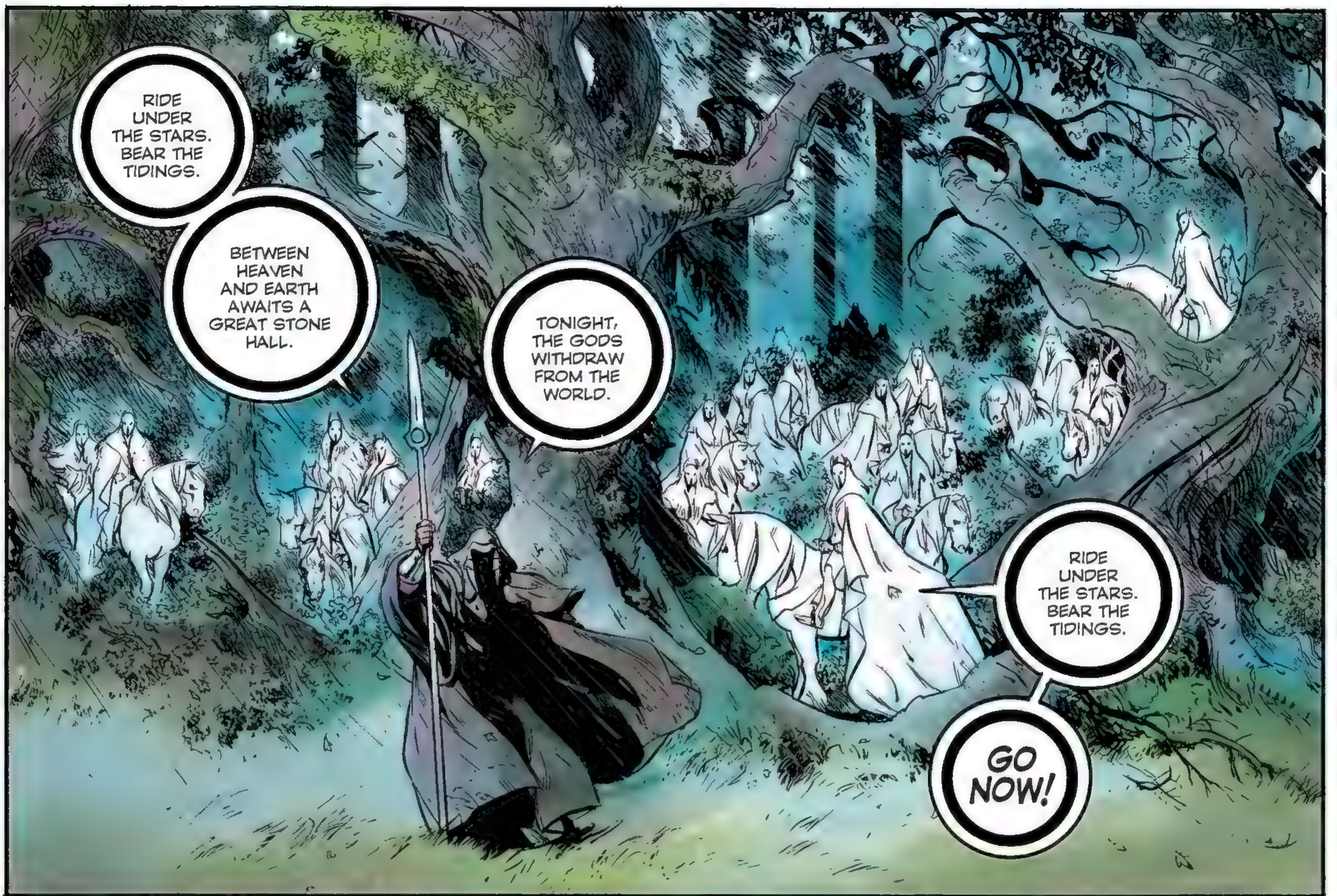












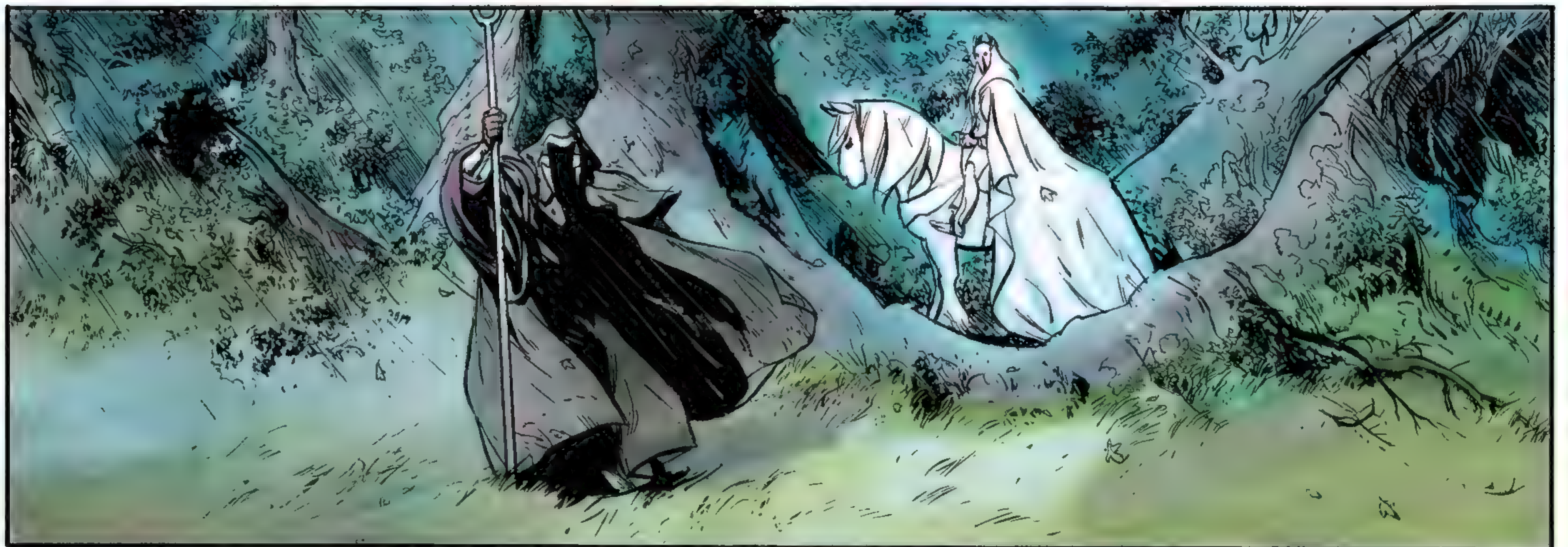
RIDE  
UNDER  
THE STARS.  
BEAR THE  
TIDINGS.

BETWEEN  
HEAVEN  
AND EARTH  
AWAITS A  
GREAT STONE  
HALL.

TONIGHT,  
THE GODS  
WITHDRAW  
FROM THE  
WORLD.

RIDE  
UNDER  
THE STARS.  
BEAR THE  
TIDINGS.

GO  
NOW!

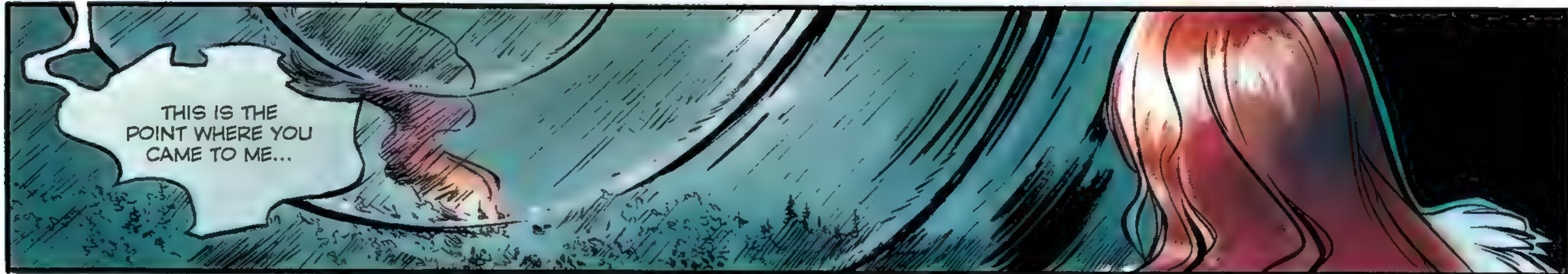
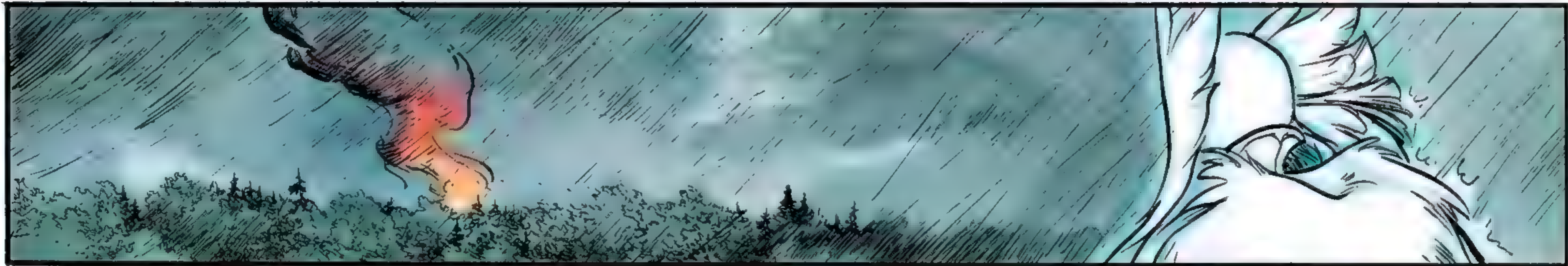
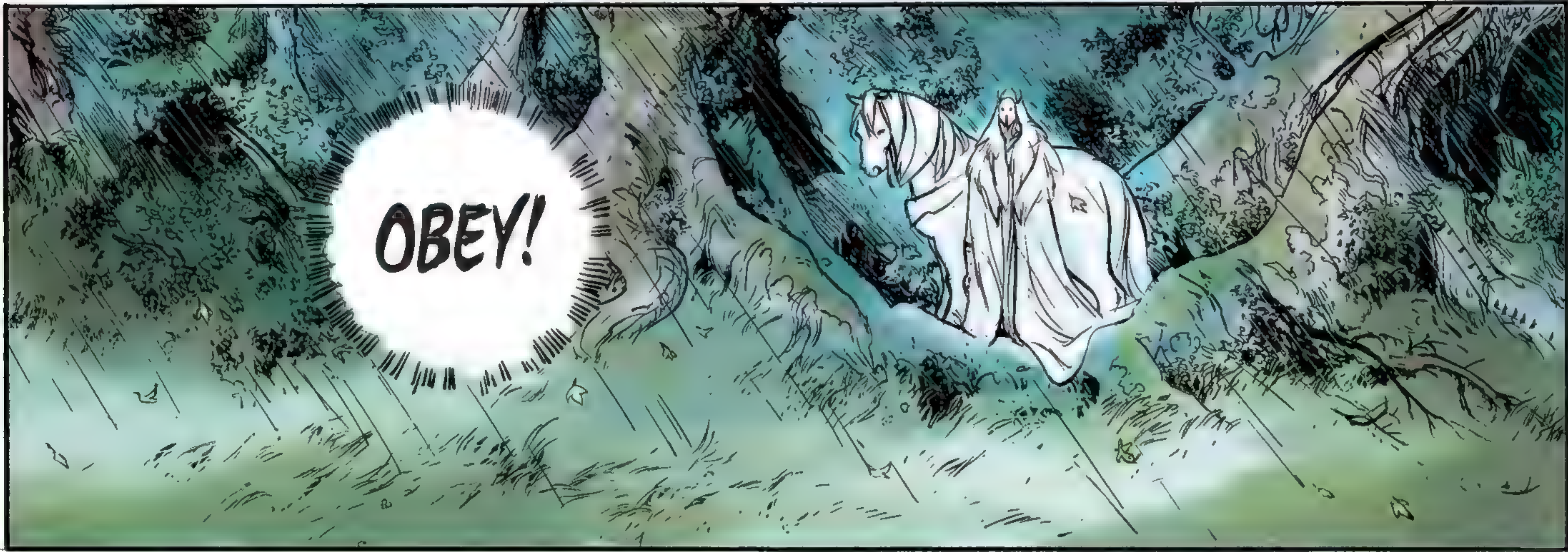
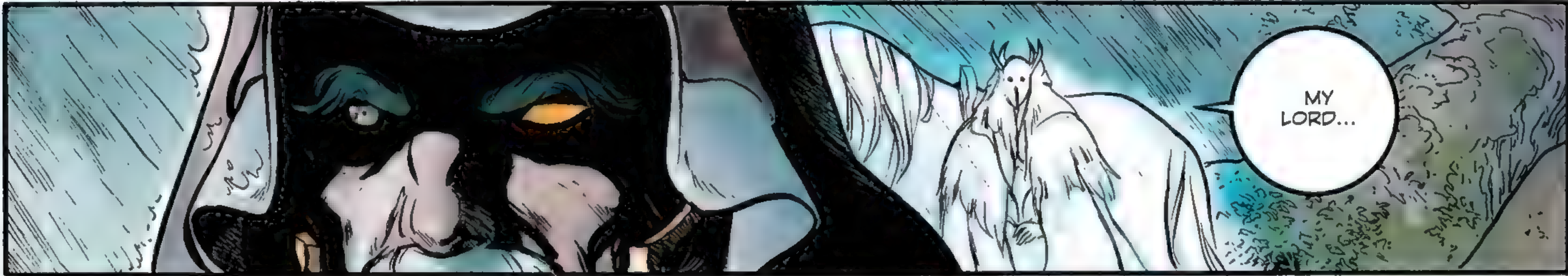
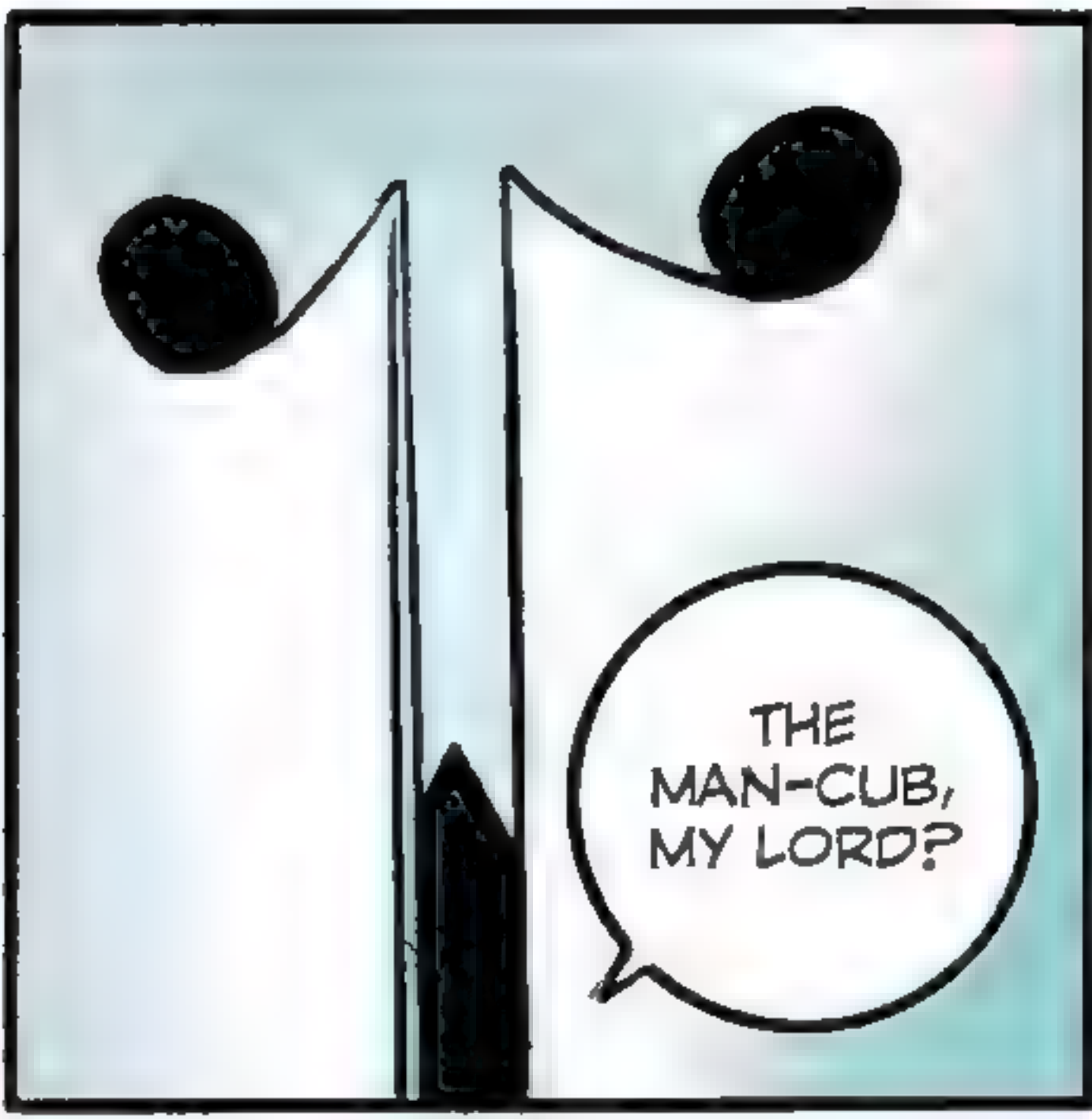
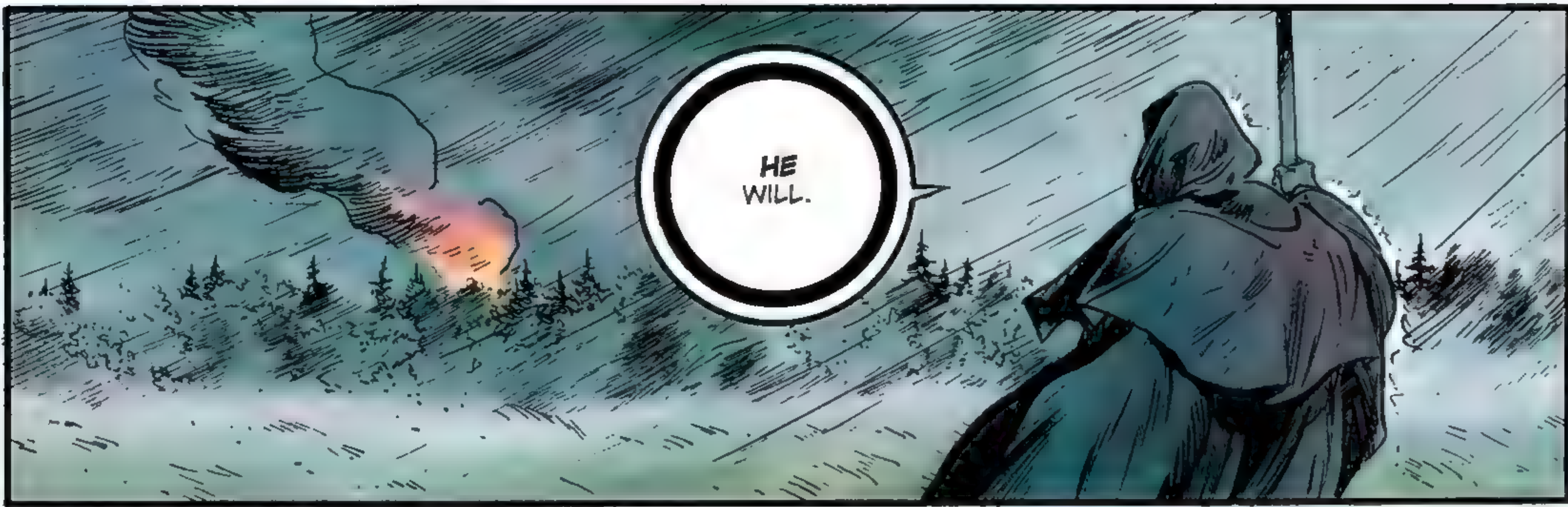


MY  
LORD...

...YOUR  
LAW HOLDS  
THE UNIVERSE IN  
PLACE! WHO WILL  
TAME THE GIANTS,  
IF NOT YOU? AND  
WHAT ABOUT  
THE GOLD?

WHO  
WILL NOW  
STAND BETWEEN  
OUR MOTHER  
AND THE  
DRAGON?









...BUT WHAT IS  
IN ODIN'S MIND,  
I CANNOT TELL.



I KNOW  
ENOUGH.

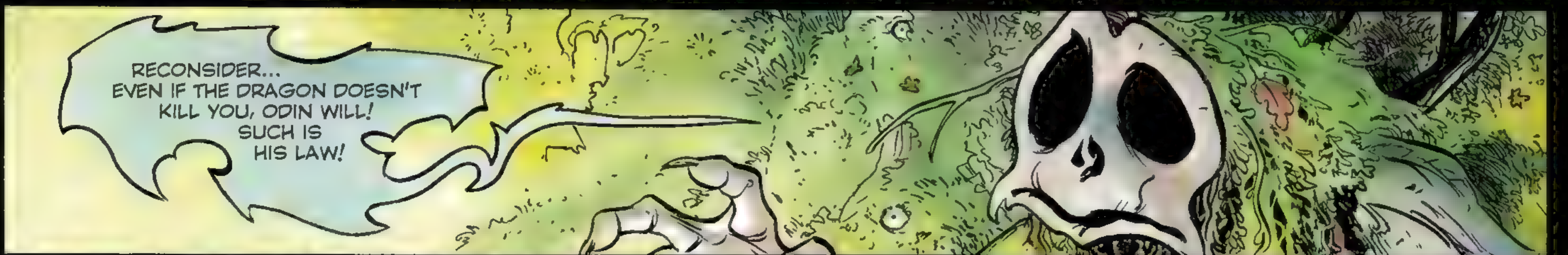
WHERE ARE  
YOU GOING?



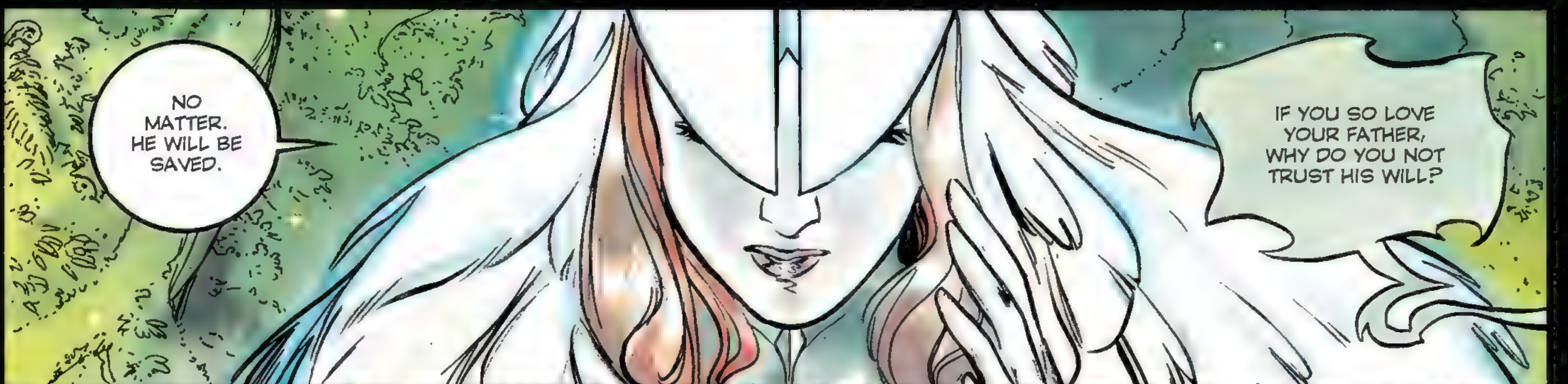
TO CHALLENGE  
FAFNIR. SLAY THE  
DRAGON. RETRIEVE  
THE GOLD.

...AND  
DISOBEY  
ODIN.

I CANNOT  
LEAVE MY  
FATHER'S FATE  
IN THE HANDS  
OF A MERE  
MORTAL.




RECONSIDER...  
EVEN IF THE DRAGON DOESN'T  
KILL YOU, ODIN WILL!  
SUCH IS  
HIS LAW!



NO  
MATTER.  
HE WILL BE  
SAVED.


IF YOU SO LOVE  
YOUR FATHER,  
WHY DO YOU NOT  
TRUST HIS WILL?



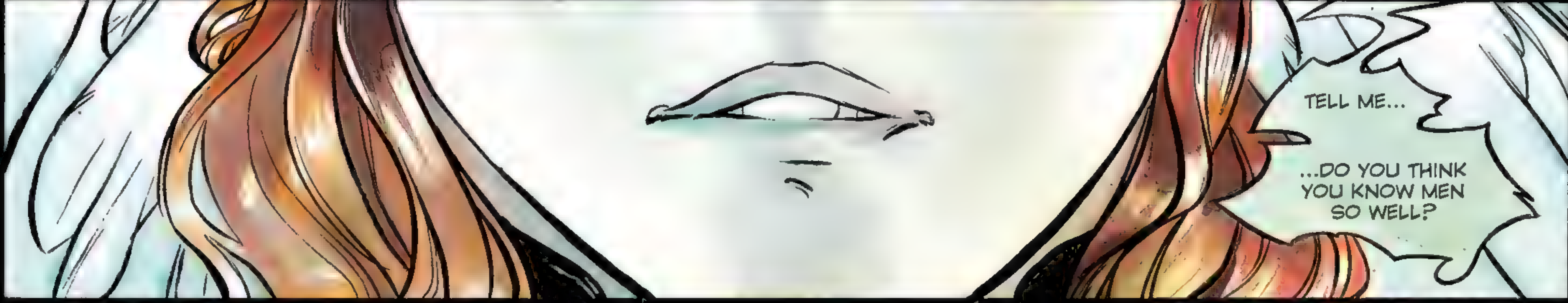


SIEGFRIED  
IS A MORTAL.  
HE IS WEAK. IGNORANT.  
HE KNOWS NOTHING OF  
FAFNIR, NOTHING OF THE  
GOLD, NOTHING OF  
MIMÉ'S PLOT TO  
POISON HIM.

EVEN IF HE  
CROSSES THE  
FORBIDDEN FOREST AND  
THE LAND OF GIANTS,  
MOUNTAIN AND MIST,  
WHAT POWER HAS HE  
AGAINST THE GOLD?  
THE MAN-CUB HASN'T  
A CHANCE AGAINST  
FAFNIR!

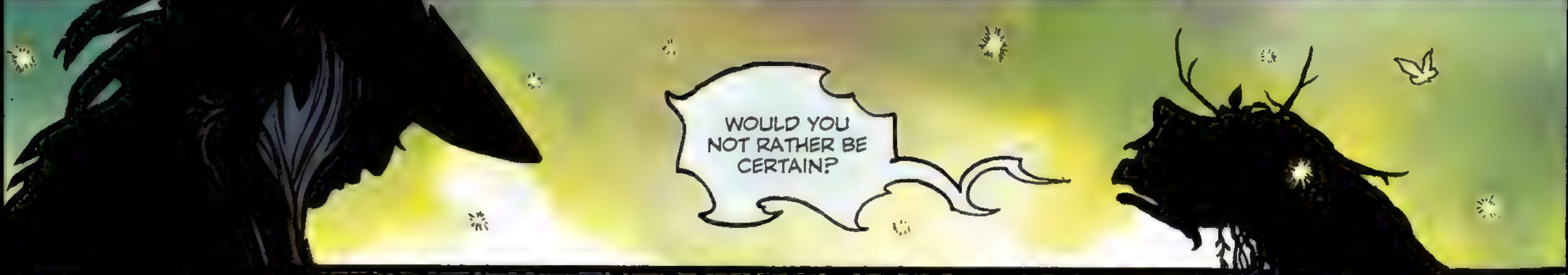


YOU'RE WILLING TO WAGER  
YOUR IMMORTAL LIFE ON  
THIS, WARRIOR-MAIDEN?




TELL ME...

...DO YOU THINK  
YOU KNOW MEN  
SO WELL?




WOULD YOU  
NOT RATHER BE  
CERTAIN?



THERE IS A WAY,  
YOU KNOW,  
I CAN SHOW  
YOU...

THE  
FUTURE.

...YOU  
KNOW ITS  
PRICE.



NOW, ARE  
YOU WILLING  
TO PAY...



...VALKYRIE?

END OF THE FIRST BOOK



## SONG OF SIEGFRIED

**B**orn in the heart of the forge  
To gnaw on wood, black charcoal  
Redden in the bellows' gust  
Smelt iron and bronze  
End in cinders, scattered  
Son of flames...  
Whence came I?  
I am not like you.

**T**o dig for my roots  
Kiss the sky  
Wed the sun  
Tremble in the wind  
And perish under the axe  
Son of ash trees...  
Whence came I?  
I am not like you.

**T**o hunt with my brothers, side by side  
Run beneath the corpses, bring the game to bay  
Scratch, bite, a face all in blood  
Cover the grey she-wolf  
Die, throat slit by my sons  
Son of the wolf pack...  
Whence came I?  
I am not like you.

**B**orn of earth and lightning  
To forge myself, tempered in the storm  
Split bronze, iron, ancient arms  
Be victory and glory  
A king's blade  
Son of steel  
You hide where I came from  
I am not  
Like you.

German, Traditional from the  
French by Antoine Galland







*Born out of the Viking sagas, Siegfried conquered immortality to Wagner's music.*

*I came across him at an age when he was still playing with the wolf cubs in the pack. His universe enlightened me, and still makes me dream even today. I, in turn, resolved to tell his story through two drawn media: the comic book and animated film. More than anything, I wanted to offer a new reading of this fundamental myth in a tone that was serious enough for children and entertaining enough for adults.*

*The following pages give me a chance to report on this work in progress. By the grace of Odin, the story will continue...*

# THE STUFF OF DREAMS

INTERVIEW WITH ALEX ALICE. BY LAURENT KLOETZER

*...in two subsequent volumes, The Valkyrie and Twilight of The Gods. It will end on a sunrise in a darkened room. My friend Laurent Kloetzer helped me to clarify, in interview format, the whole of my creative process, revealed here for the first time. While you're waiting for The Valkyrie...*

*Welcome to the dawn of time!*



Laurent Kloetzer is the author of several fantasy novels (the latest: *The Wounded Kingdom*, from Éditions Denoël). He and Alex Alice have known each other for a long time and frequently exchange ideas about fantastical worlds, stories, and heroes with horses and swords, from *Conan the Barbarian* to Joseph Campbell's *Hero with A Thousand Faces*.







LAURENT KLOETZEM | In *Siegfried*, you offer your own vision of Norse legend. Yet the universe of the Scandinavian gods is relatively unknown in France. How did you discover this mythology? What were your sources?

# COSMOLOGY

ALEX ADIC | My first exposure was *The Ring of the Nibelung*. I was familiarized at an early age with Richard Wagner's tetralogy when the Chéreau/Boulez version aired on television. My father had recorded it on four enormous cassettes. I must have been 9 or 10. When my father started telling me the story, I was completely enchanted and I decided to watch it in its entirety. Fourteen hours of opera! I holed up comfortably with provisions. *The Rhinegold* began... an hour later, I woke up. Failure number one.

Undiscouraged, I tried again, once, twice; taking it from the top each time to immerse myself in the universe. But I found myself faced with gods who looked like German opera singers. *The Ring* eluded me. All those heroes, the legends, the magic ring, the sword and the dragon who were in my father's stories—all laid low by the production's dryness. Despite my efforts, I never got past *The Valkyrie*, the second opera. As a child, I never saw *Siegfried*, I never got to the dragon. And in the meantime, I had discovered *The Lord of the Rings*. And so, finally, the promised world of gods, dwarves and shattered swords opened for me.









(I)

AA | It was a revelation, of course. But after that, *The Ring* became a sort of Everest for me, an incredible fantasy, because it was inaccessible, mythic. The mere names of the operas (*The Rhinegold*, *The Valkyrie*, *Twilight of the Gods*) haunted my dreams. Years later, in 2000, I was finishing up *The Third Testament* and thinking about what I wanted to do next. I had a few projects. I was looking for subjects that would focus me, particularly on the opera side of things. I didn't consider *The Ring*, which seemed too complicated. I only saw the big ideas, and not enough human potential to make the story interesting. But I still had Siegfried's *Funeral March* on the brain, heard in John Boorman's *Excalibur*.

So I was finishing up *The Third Testament*, in the midst of research, and one day in a used record store, I saw a boxed set of *The Ring*, lovely but expensive. I bought something else and left. I regretted it right away. When I got to the corner, I turned around, went back, and bought it. I put it on the turntable that night. I couldn't remember the beginning of the work and wondered how, from a strictly musical point of view, Wagner had begun a 14 hour work with such titanic stakes. The record began with the overture from *The Rhinegold*. I don't know if you're familiar with it; it's the piece I wound up using for the film's pilot. It's magnificent. It's the creation of the world. I was flabbergasted. I listened to *The Ring* in its entirety, libretto in hand. Freed from the images of the filmed opera, I was enchanted anew. Wagner's visions were inspired, powerful, romantic, fantastical... And in terms of drama, the libretto is very strong. I had found the story that I wanted to tell and put into images.

LK | What form did those images take?

AA | At the beginning, I envisioned a huge one-shot which would've stuck fairly close to the first opera, with the vague idea of adapting each of the others in the same way. But as work on the script progressed, I found myself incorporating elements from the other Ring operas, personal inspirations and elements from other sources, which made too much material for one book. So I revisited my plans and decided to do a triptych revolving around the character of Siegfried.

Around the same time, I came across the storyboard for *Akira*, and said to myself, "This is the movie, exactly!" All the shots, all the frames were there. I realized then that we could start work on an animated film with a shoestring budget. And with *Siegfried*, I had the premise for a beautiful film, a film that could be aimed at children and adults alike. To be sure, I had a few cherished illusions about the "shoestring budget," which were what allowed me to start work.

LK | You are well known for your comics work. Why did you make the jump to animated films?

AA | Because I love them! Professionally, I've spent a lot of time in the animation world, right up to my latest collaboration on Bibo Bergeron's *A Monster in Paris*. For *Siegfried*, my goal right off the bat was to make a really beautiful film. 90 minutes, full animation, the technique from Golden Age Disney or Miyazaki films. It's the ideal structure for these tales and legends. Disney wasn't interested in the subjects, Ghibli was the only studio still offering high-quality fantastical stories. Why not launch a European project?



(II)



Thanks to the Disney studios in Montreuil, Europe really does have the talent to make a film of the quality these legends deserve.

LK | I'd love for you to talk about the development of the film.

AA | I first spoke about the project with Matthieu Lauffray, author of the comics *Prophet* and *Long John Silver* and the designer on several cinematic productions. We started researching the visuals. He saw to the film's artistic direction. We prepped production with André Clavet, a veteran of Warner Bros. and the California studios. Then we picked a great designer, Claire Wendling, who was particularly gifted when it came to animals. Afterwards, we had to find a studio to shoot a pilot a few minutes long. The purpose of that pilot, along with the script, was to offer a preview of the finished film. A director friend, Christophe Ferreira, introduced me to the Bibo Films/Pumpkin studio, which had done some very convincing animation tests, and we decided to work with them. I spent several months with the studio team at every stage of the pilot. We set up the animated storyboard with the shots cued to the music (the overture of *The Rhinegold* and an excerpt from *The Planets*, the orchestral suite by Gustav Holst).

The transition from comics characters to animated characters posed new problems for me. For example, I consider my cartoon characters to be semi-realistic representations: the faces, in particular, are heavily stylized. But for the animators, they were hyper-realistic, very hard to animate. So for the character design, I had to specify an incredible number of things, down to the number of Siegfried's locks of hair. In the same way, Mimé had to be severely modified for the animated film, my characters not making the transition to three dimensions well at all.

Then there was the work on the scenery, the layout, the animation of course, and the special effects (anything that moves but isn't a character). We also spent a long time on the sound mixing, inserting all the sound effects, which were many, from a traveller's footsteps to a hammer falling on an anvil.



(III)

NON-CAPTIONED IMAGES IN THE BOOK ARE FROM PULLED FROM THE ANIMATED FILM.

(PAGE 84) **SIEGFRIED** by Fritz Lang: splendid, audacious, and Expressionist.

(PAGE 86-87) **JÖRMUNGANDR**, oil on canvas, 130x81 cm. The Midgard Serpent holds the world of Siegfried in its coils. Illustration created for the book *Dragons* (Daniel Maghen, 2008)

(PAGE 90-91) **SIEGLINDE**, oil on canvas, 90x70 cm. Siegfried's mother. First painting of the legend. Poster for the *Momie Folie* publication

- (I) **PAUL RICHTER AS SIEGFRIED.**  
Fritz Lang, *Die Nibelungen* (1924)
- (II) **SIEGFRIED AND THE GREAT ASH.**  
Sketch based on the first synopsis. Pencil with highlights on Ingres, digital colorization.
- (III) **THE QUEEN OF THE NIGHT**, oil on canvas, 70x90 cm  
A valkyrie before The Valkyrie. Poster for the *Momie Folie* publication.











LAURENT KLOETZER | How does the *Siegfried* of Alex Alice fit into the *Siegfried* of Wagner?

# MYTHOLOGY

ALEX ALICE | Easily! I am neither a “Wagnerite” nor an expert in Norse mythology. The poetry of Wagner and those sagas touched me as a spectator, not a specialist. When I read Wagner’s libretto or listen to his music, I get *The Ring*, I see things I’ve never seen anywhere else, especially on stage. The cycle is absolutely packed with heartrending scenes of great symbolic power. There is my impetus, the lifeblood of my story, as you say.

I’ve taken the approach of a storyteller for *Siegfried*. In creating my story, I drew on many, many sources, from ancient legends to very modern interpretations, because I didn’t want to just adapt the opera as is. In comics, P. Craig Russell already did that in his book *The Ring of the Nibelung*. It’s an almost perfect adaptation; Russell adjusted the dialogue for comics. But, for me, though his narrative is hard to top, it does suffer from the bias of fidelity. Some scenes from the opera are so closely based on the music that they can’t exist on the page in a satisfying way. And the story as it is didn’t suit me. I wanted to tell “my” Siegfried story.





**EXCERPT FROM THE FULL-LENGTH SCRIPT.**

*The scene preceding the chase in the snow as found in the comic. Here, Siegfried's mother is a valkyrie. The introduction presents the characters without dialogue. Conceived for movement and music, it transfers poorly to comics. In the book, the use of Völva's narration allows for more complex exposition in flashback. Sieglinde, future mother of Siegfried, becomes the guardian of gold.*



## OVERTURE

### 0.1 EXT. BATTLEFIELD - NIGHT

Hundreds of pinpoints of light evoke a field of stars. These are the small, cold flames which burn above the lips of dead warriors, stretched out along the rocky coast.

A young MAN, mortally wounded, crawls up the shattered prow of a longship. A bloody sword in his hand, he sits back against the wreckage, contemplating the disaster.

Waves break the silence. The man laments the death of his comrades. He tosses his crown away; it lands in a pool of seawater. On his throne of misfortune, the young king closes his eyes.

The cold flames flicker in unison. The man looks up: on the horizon, the lights disappear in entire rows, swallowed up by a curtain of darkness.

Out of the mist, knights in armor advance on the battlefield in supernatural unison. Pale on pale horses, death-helms over their faces, they move forward like a row of scythes. The flames are extinguished in their wake.

The man straightens, sword in hand: one of the knights has alighted on the earth before him.

The man holds the knight at bay, then collapses into unconsciousness. The knight bends over the dying man. He removes his helm. It's a WOMAN! She is fascinated by the beautiful, wounded face.

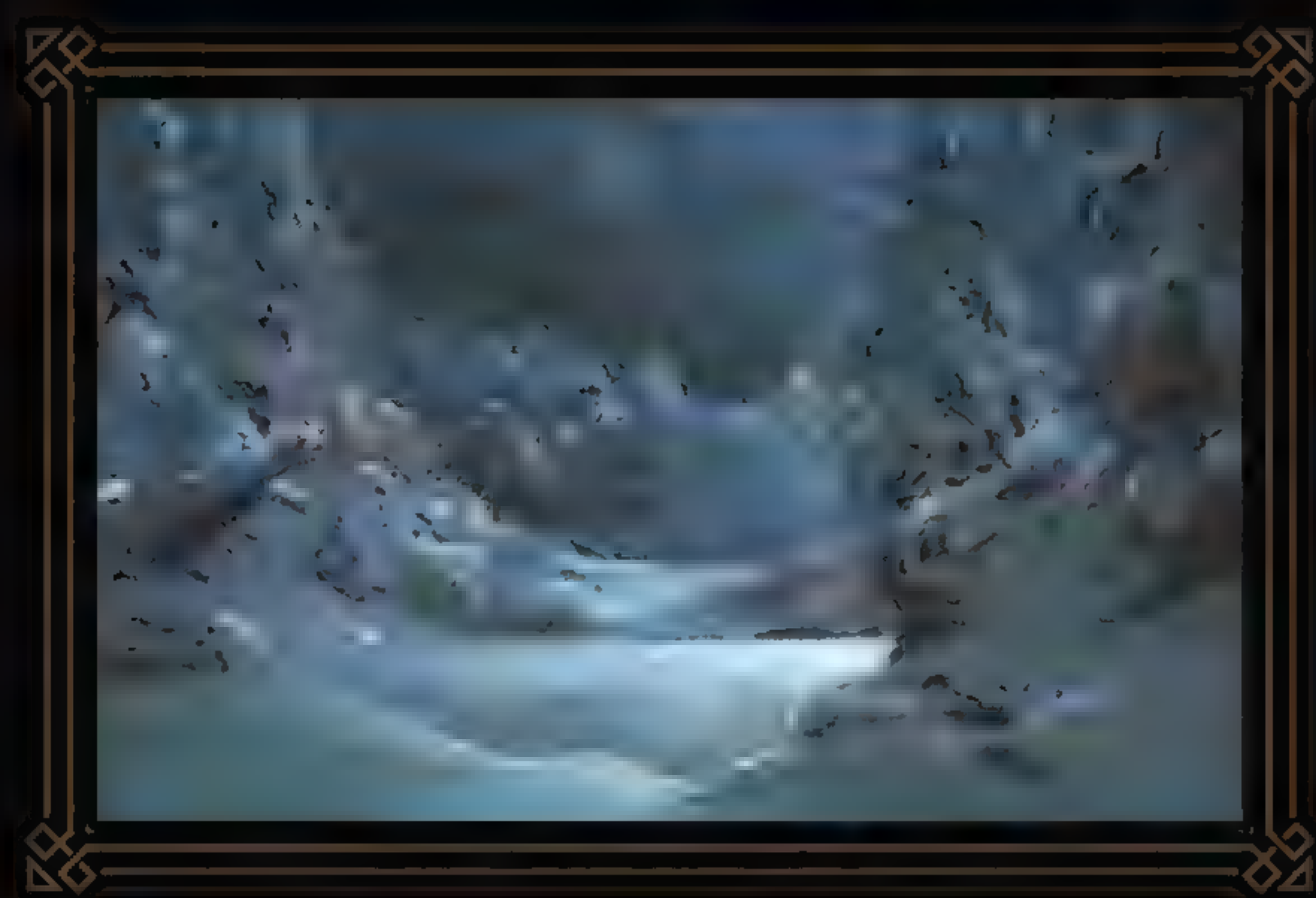
She looks around anxiously. Then she takes from her cloak a GOLDEN APPLE and places it above the man's lips. With a painful grimace, she pushes a nail through the fruit. A red fluid flows into the dying man's lips. His wounds close themselves. He regains consciousness.

Filled with wonder, he caresses the face of his benefactress. Wrapped up in their delight, neither of them notice the raven perched on the longship's prow. The man brings the fruit to her lips, the woman does not refuse. The wind picks up. The raven beats its wings, the lovers pay no attention. Losing himself in the woman's face, the man takes a huge bite - but the sound is one of THUNDER...

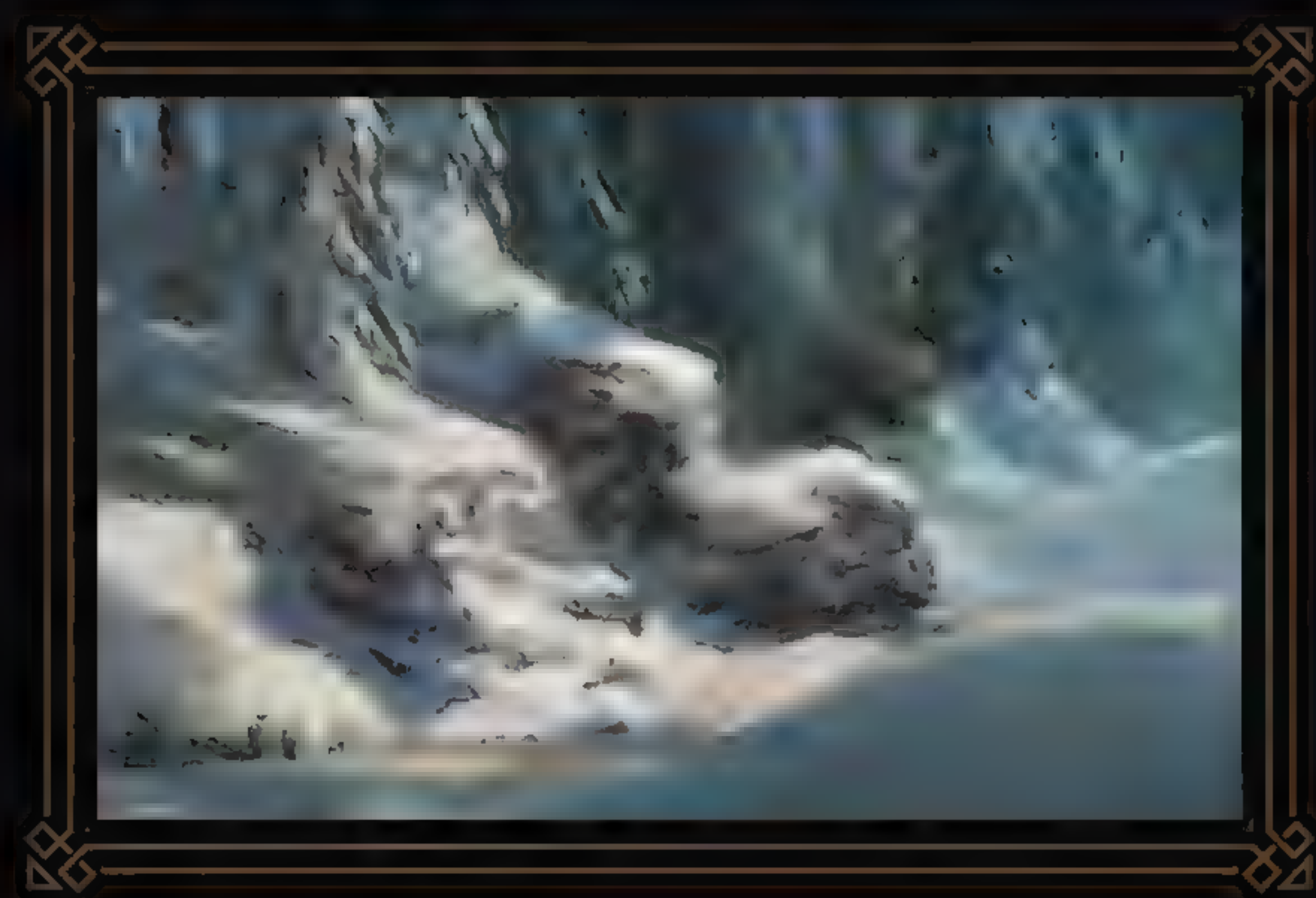




(I)



(II)



(III)

AA In the legend, I recognized quite a number of elements Tolkien and George Lucas had reprised, and beneath it, I could feel some archetypal form of the tale of initiation, of rites of passage into adulthood. I looked into Wagner's approach, and his sources.

I turned mainly to the *Völsunga Saga*, the Norse legend cycle, and the *Nibelungenlied*, the courtly German version. There were other traditions too, two or three more folkloric stories. The *Nibelungenlied* didn't interest me much. It's a 13th century courtly ballad; anything overtly fantastical or mythological has been removed. The gods don't intervene anymore, the dragon is barely sketched, and you find yourself in romantic rivalries and machinations at court. Nevertheless, the *Lied* enriched my appreciation for the subject and helped me understand that what interested me was more likely found in Nordic rather than Germanic spheres.

*Siegfried* (the opera) now poses some dramatic problems for me, the main one being that I hate the character of Siegfried as Wagner presents him.





KK | From what I've seen, Wagner's Siegfried is a big guy, violent, a bit mean, made even more unappealing by Chéreau's mise en scène. Your Siegfried is dark, lean and malnourished during his childhood. Wagner's Siegfried plays with a bear, yours hangs around with wolves. So why adapt Wagner's *Siegfried* if you hate the main character so much?

AA | It's a paradox. On the one hand, what I like about Wagner's vision is the terrible power in how he evokes the gods: Wotan (the Germanic Odin), Donar (Thor)... And in *The Valkyrie*, we see these incredible scenes, notably in the relationship between Wotan and Brünnhilde. I could've picked *The Valkyrie*. But Siegfried is an initiatory opera, and that's what immediately appealed to me. I really liked the idea of a boy who knew nothing, to whom everything would be taught, because that's a very strong vehicle for reader identification. A reader can enter the story knowing no more than a character like that and discover, with his own eyes, a universe both terrible and marvelous.

To return to Wagner: as you may know, the composer/dramatist started writing from the end, from the tragedy of Siegfried's death. Then, he wrote about the hero's youth, then an opera explaining his familial origins (*The Valkyrie*), then a prologue (*The Rhinegold*). The process was very long and I think that as Wagner wrote, his ideas of the characters evolved. In the end, it seems to me he had a much greater attachment to Siegmund, Siegfried's father, than to Siegfried himself.



In any case, Wagner's Siegfried is an ass, even if he's a magnificent ass. Wagner had a very broad spectrum of heroes, from Wotan to Siegmund, and Siegmund to Siegfried. This way, he could study one of the hero's unique aspects in Siegfried: total free will, entirely exempt from all law and morality. Since I only wanted to deal with Siegfried, I tried to create a more complex hero, who also had a bit of his father Siegmund in him.

(I) MIMÉ AT THE THRESHOLD OF THE GREAT ADARNO.  
Pastel, 16x24 cm.

(II) THE FROST'S POST.  
Pastel, 16x24 cm.

(III) THE FOREST IN THE SNOW.  
Pastel, 16x24 cm.

(IV) SIEGFRIED AND THE GREAT ADARNO.  
Sketch, crayon and highlights on Ingres, 32x24 cm.





(1)



AA | I've preserved the opera's big scenes, but I've hugely extended the story and included mythological elements I found elsewhere. That's how I worked the scenes that interested me from all the other operas into a single story revolving around the character of Siegfried. For the subsequent books, I've held on to the titles *The Valkyrie* and *Twilight of The Gods* because I included big moments from these chapters in Siegfried's story.

UK | Reading the *Völsunga Saga*, I was struck by certain strange goings-on, like the story of Loki killing an otter that was eating a salmon, the otter being a transformed giant. Or the gods of Asgard condemned to cover an otter skin with gold, which leads to endless misfortunes. There we have everything fascinating in myth, at once understandable and absurd.

AA | The feeling of being at once coherent and incomprehensible is a part of myth. In that way, it is like a dream: we feel a meaning, a coherence, but it resists rational analysis. I wanted to preserve that aspect here. When I approach a mythical story, I understand certain elements that I want to highlight. And there are some elements that I don't understand. Insofar as it's possible, I preserve them and I give the reader freedom of interpretation. However, a myth is not a script, so to render one on film or in a book, you have to dramatize it, which requires a certain number of changes, even betrayals of the text.

UK | Could you introduce your story's universe and its relationship with our own? How do you see it? What are some of the places we might find there? What are its inhabitants like?

AA | I never think about the universe detached from character and the things that are going to happen to him. I've kept Wagner's idea, that this story is a mythic story unfolding in a mythic time. Unlike in the *Völsunga Saga* and the *Nibelungenlied*, which unfold during our world's history. In the *Völsunga Saga*, Siegfried is the son of one king, sent to be raised by another, as was common then. The story takes place near the Rhine, among the Huns. Wagner largely jettisons this historical aspect.



(I) *SIEGMUND AND SIEGLIND.*  
*Searching for Siegfried's parents.*









LK | In your book, where are we?

AA | We are in the time of myth, in one of the fascinating in-between worlds of these sagas. Norse mythology describes nine worlds, situated in the roots and branches of the great ash, Yggdrasil, the world-tree.

My story unfolds at the edge of the world, in the great Eastern Forest, beyond which nothing lies. Towards the west is the land of giants, and far beyond that, the land of men. The world of myth is inaccessible to men, save for the great heroes.

Above this world is the land of mists, the world of the Nibelungs, whose entrance is far from the great Eastern Forest. And the gods reign over all this from the celestial sphere.

LK | You talk about a mythical universe, removed from our own, but if there's one thing that impressed me about your art, in this as well as in *The Third Testament*, it's your way with landscapes. Mountains, skies, forests, pools. These are the landscapes of our world!

AA | Yes and no. They're idealized versions. I try very hard to hit on archetypes. To do a story of *the* Hero in *the* Forest. A forest with an atmosphere that changes as Siegfried ages, as his outlook evolves.



STORYBOARD EXCERPT. In this initial version, Siegfried's mother flees into the forest after Siegmund's death and collapses beside the Great Ash.







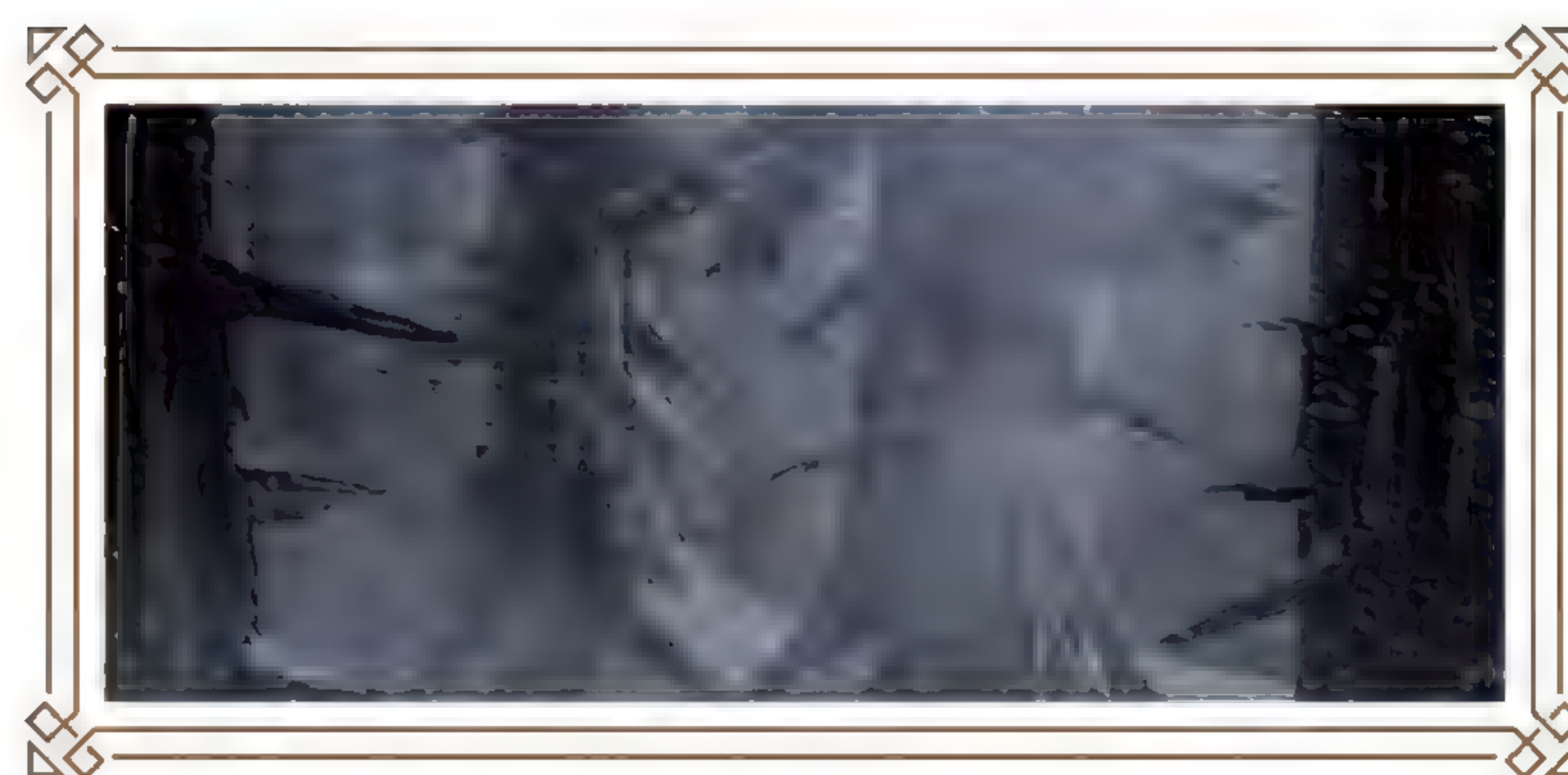
LK | From a narrative point of view, your book corresponds to the first act of the opera *Siegfried*. It tells the story of Siegfried's childhood, the relationship between Siegfried and Mimé, the forge and the sword. In Wagner, it's an opportunity to set up an impossible father-son relationship, with Mimé seeking love from a brute. In yours, Mimé is much "harder," much crueler. You aren't talking about the same thing at all!

AA | I think we are. I've tried to identify the story's archetypal elements. It's influenced many works; you could even say it's a template for hero stories. But in my opinion, it has one specific thing you don't find in other stories: the absence of a mentor. In fact, Siegfried winds up with a dysfunctional mentor. Mimé is a very bad father; Siegfried does learn things, but generally in an accidental way.



In the opera, everything unfolds on a very tight schedule. The teenaged Siegfried recalls his childhood in a musical flashback. For the adaptation, I wanted to space it out, put things in order and recount Siegfried's childhood. I wondered how Siegfried had grown up, how he'd developed such hatred for Mimé by the time he was teenager. So what was the worst way for Mimé to be a father to Siegfried without making himself an enemy?

But I don't agree with you: for me, Wagner's Mimé doesn't try to get Siegfried's love. He has a very specific interest in convincing Siegfried to do what he wants: kill Fafnir and recover the gold and the ring. Once Siegfried is a teenager, Mimé has no leverage over him. But there was an entire era when Siegfried was a child, and Mime cared for him.



(PAGE 102) THE FORGE. Early research. A fairy-tale like ambiance

(1) FIRST SKETCHES OF MIMÉ.  
More frightening and sure of himself  
than in the final version







For me, little Siegfried sees Mimé as his real father. He admires him, wants his approval. And Mimé shamelessly takes advantage of this, treating him really poorly. Mimé raises Siegfried for his own ends, which I find despicable. And Mimé ends up doing things that are horrible in Siegfried's eyes and lead to his rebellion.

In both Wagner's version and mine, I think Mimé subconsciously really loves Siegfried. He cared for him, fed him, changed his diapers. I really wanted to avoid a Cosette situation. Mimé is certainly a bad father, but in a subtle way, because he doesn't educate the kid out of love, only self-interest. He doesn't watch out for what the child wants; he lies to him, and forges Siegfried for a single goal.

**LK | I'd like to talk a little more about Mimé. In Wagner, he's a bum. Though he's alleged to be an excellent blacksmith, he proves completely incapable of making so much as a sword. He's even a failure as a cook. In yours, Mimé is an improbable creature, truly supernatural with four-fingered hands and huge eyes, horns. Where did this character come from, both physically and intellectually?**

AA | I've drawn a lot from Wagner, his Mimé is fantastic. Very early on, I tried to understand how he works. While working, I kind of took it in my own direction. But Wagner's Mimé is a very solid base. I went looking for his physical aspect among the dwarves of Norse mythology, which are these subterranean creatures who turn to stone in the sunlight, who are very close to the kingdom of the dead. They respect the dead, whom they fear. I wanted to highlight the fantastical part of the story as much as possible. I didn't want them to be miniature humans, but actual fantastical creatures. The big eyes are for seeing better underground, like with Gollum. And I wanted to err on the side of the cartoonish, take advantage of the expressiveness that that kind of look allows. The horns were to make him look a little bit diabolical; after all, he's a dragon's brother!

Clearly, Mimé owes a lot to the film *The Dark Crystal*, and its designer Brian Froud, and the Muppets in general. I adore their expressiveness. His stoop is that of a very meticulous worker who spends all his days at the forge, who even sleeps there. His work is his life. Like all the Nibelungs, Mimé is incapable of introspection, of self-reflection. That's why he talks about himself in the third person.

He's one of the world's mythological creatures; he's not meant for the initiatory passage. He is eternal, like all the Nibelungs. They were born at the beginning of time, and they will be there until the twilight of the titans. They aren't a race in the Tolkien sense. They don't reproduce, they do as they've always done: mine and forge. Being incapable of self-reflection, they are incapable of aspiring to anything else.

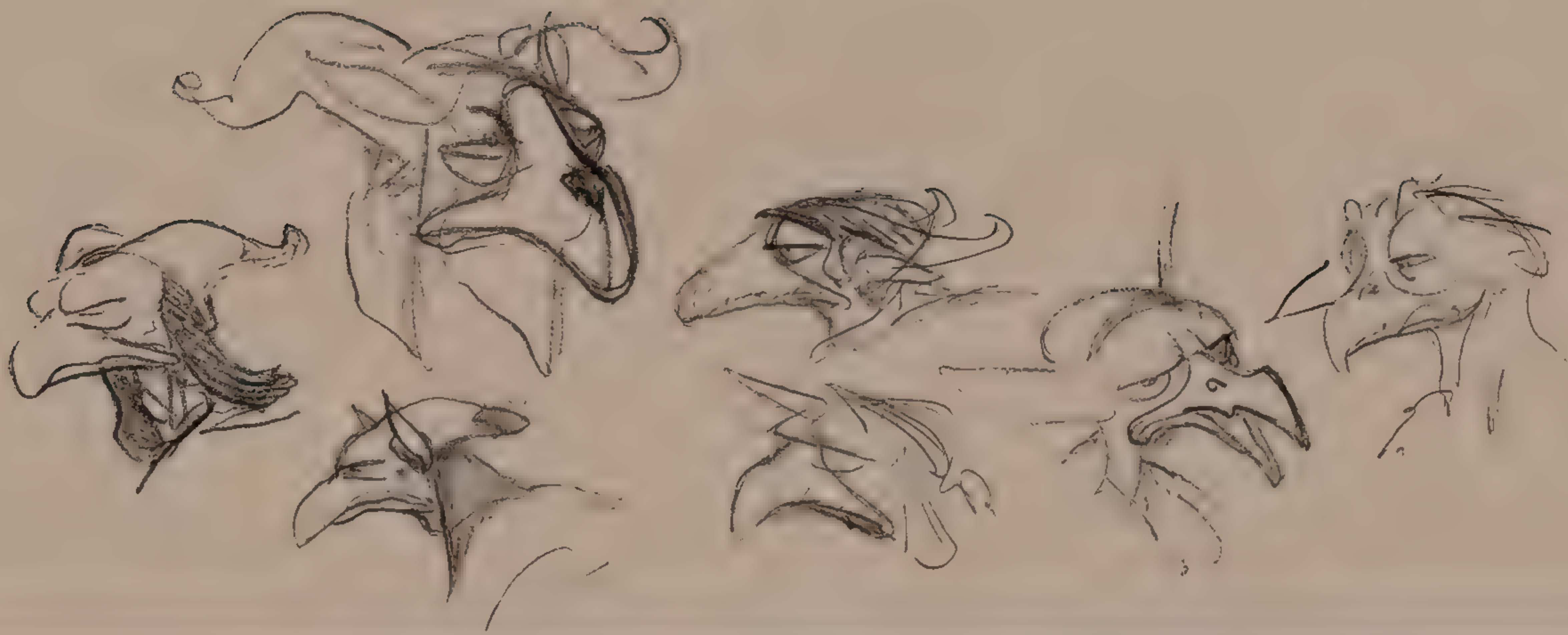
Of all the Nibelungs, Mimé and Fafnir have the most personal, individualized journeys. Since they are projected into history and time, they are forced to evolve.



(I) **MIMÉ** as he appears in the comic.  
The horns are those seen on Romuald,  
the ram in F'murr's *Génie des Alpagnes*.

(II) **MIMÉ** first color test.  
Very early on, the Nibelung took on the silhouette and  
expression that he kept throughout the development.







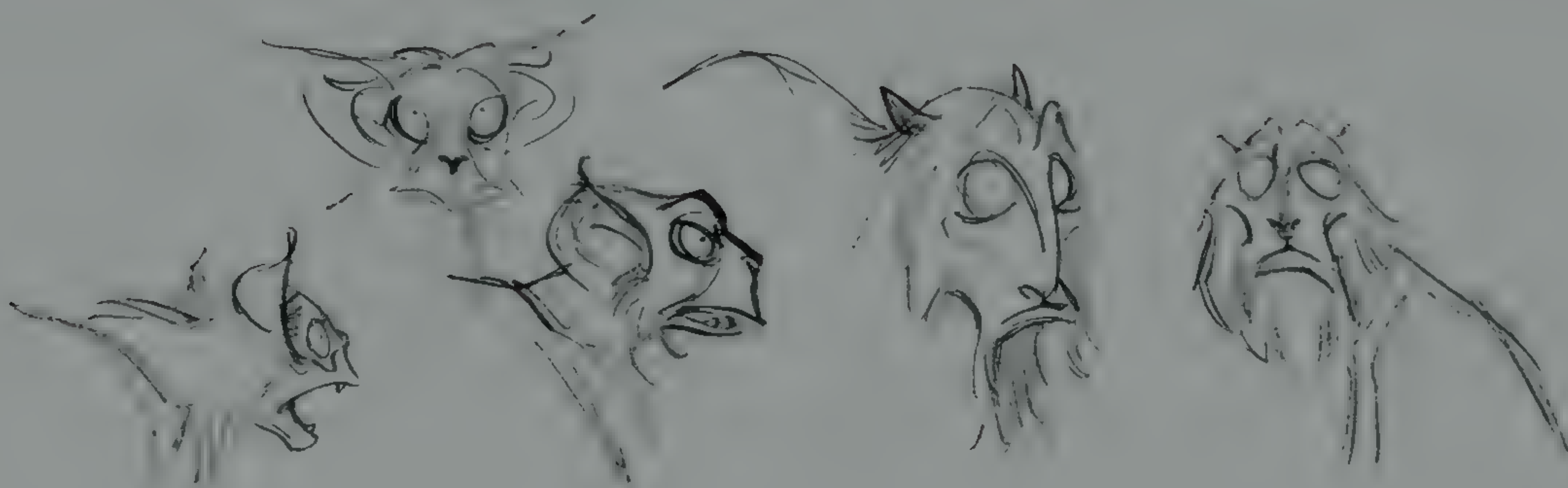
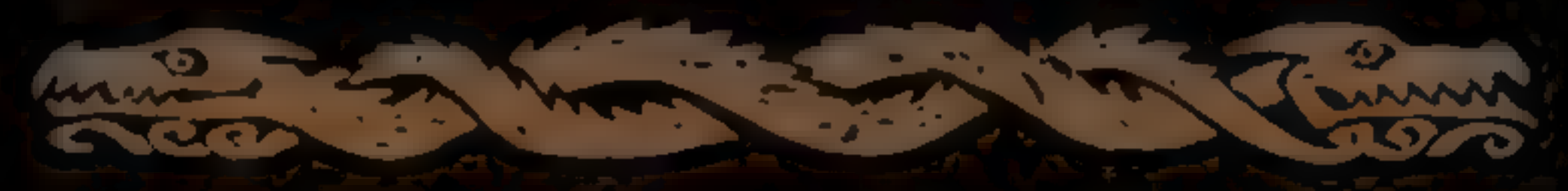


LK | **They're tragic characters!**

AA | Not really, because they cannot step back and see that their situation is tragic. To a certain point, yes, because the grand tradition of the Nibelungs is to be under the earth or in the forge, and that was disrupted by the discovery of Desire and Gold.

Their relationship with water also plays a role in their physical appearance. In the story, passing into the water is a kind of passage into the subconscious, a way to self-knowledge. But the Nibelungs are amphibious; for them, the water's surface has no importance. They go from their mythological, symbolic existence and into reality without noticing the difference. They have webbed hands.

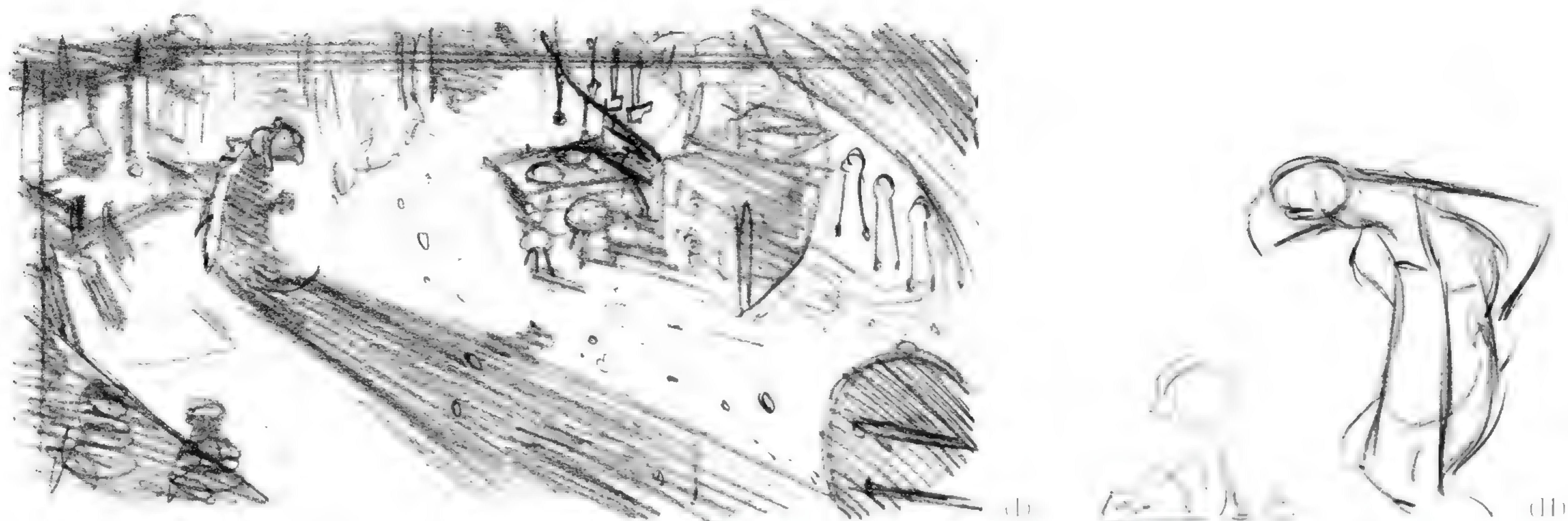
At the beginning, I thought I'd make Mimé completely insensitive to all things, but then I gave him one small personal pleasure: he really loves to eat. Mimé is very sophisticated when it comes to food. His is all based on mushrooms, of course, as he lives underground. And he is tireless. When he sleeps, he doesn't dream, since he himself is of the dream world.











(III)



*Mime's physiognomy owes much to the Muppets and Jim Henson's The Dark Crystal. And Carl Barks' ducks. My Nibelung also borrows some of their most delicious expressions*

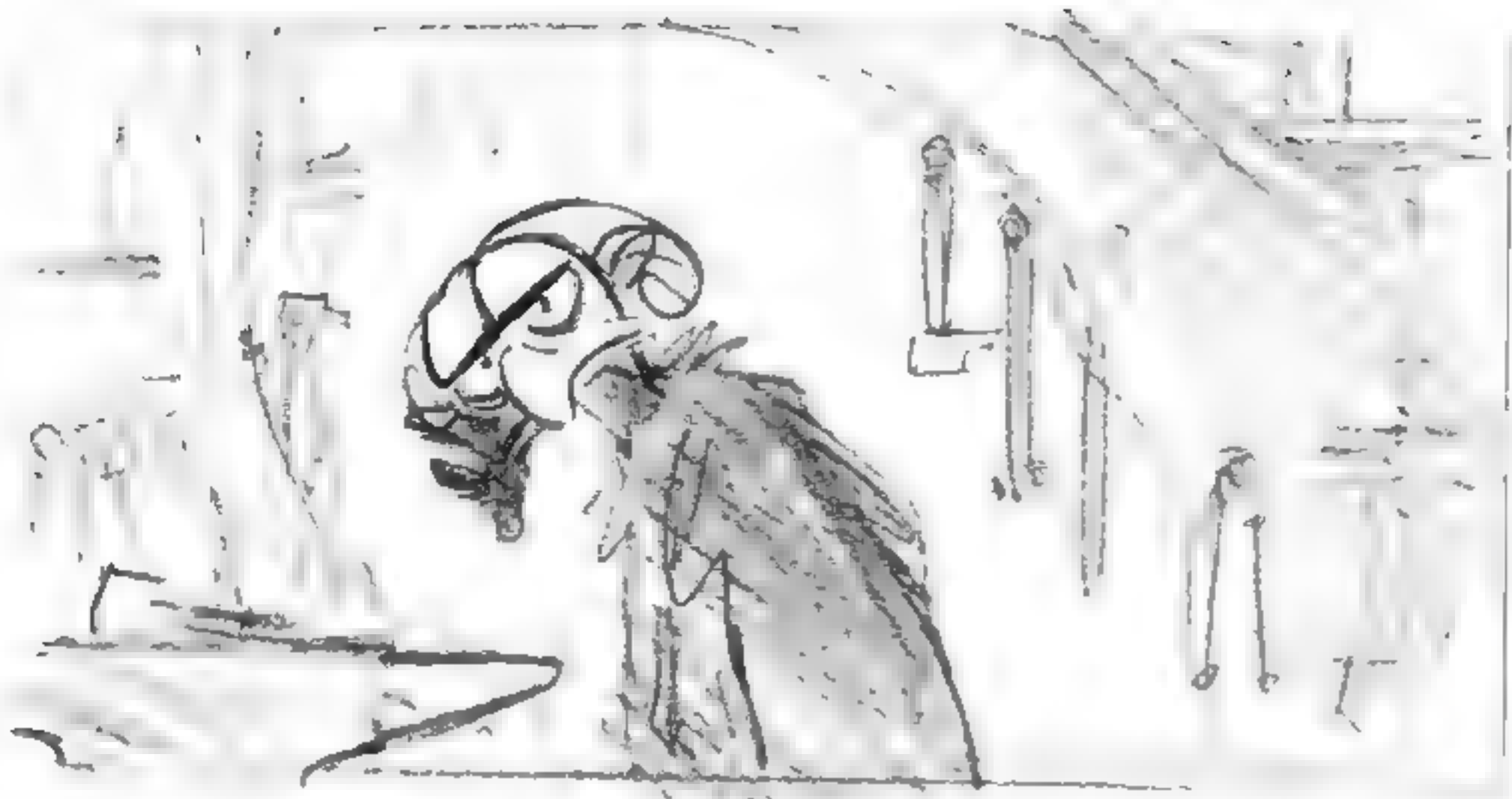
- (I) **STORYBOARD EXTRACT.**
- (II) **ROUGH SKETCH BY HABIB LOUATI.**
- (III) **THE FORGE. Main entrance.**  
*Atmosphere sketch. Pastels, 16x8 cm*





*In comics, I love the idea of shoving characters from different schools of art together. For the animated film, Alex Hesse went over the design, making it more realistic, as he was worried about a sense of coherence among the characters. With the animators, we had to specify a whole host of details I'd never imagined. In comics, design is manipulated to best suit the feeling. In animation, the character is drawn over and over by a number of animators. To ensure consistency of appearance, we specify as much as possible about the design.*





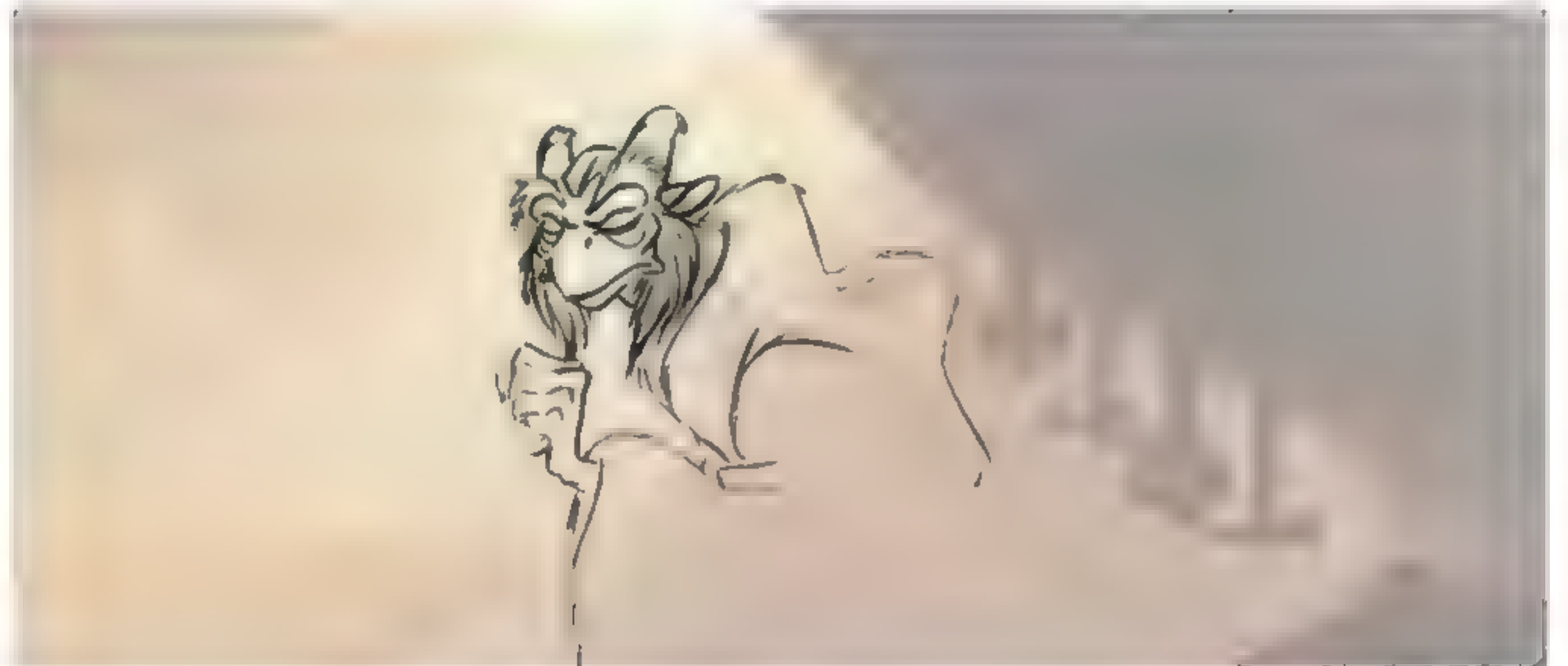
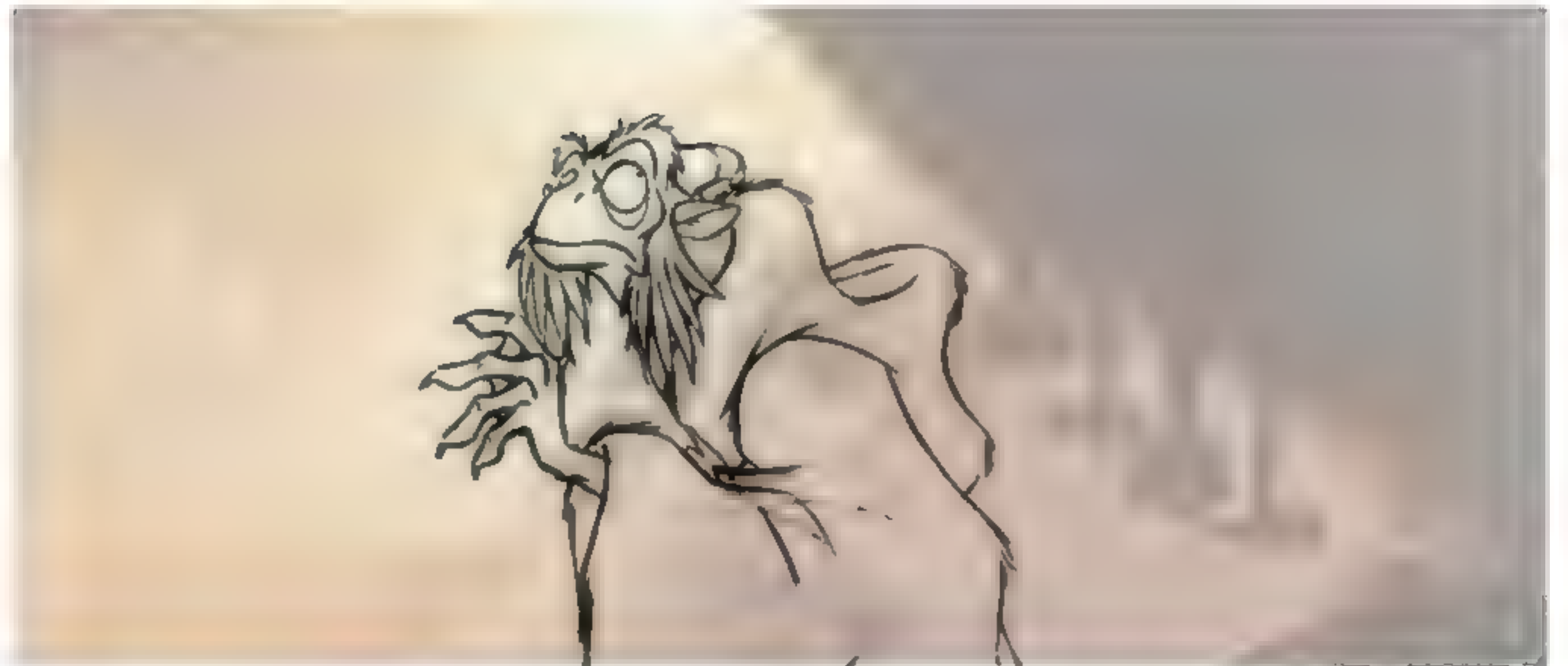
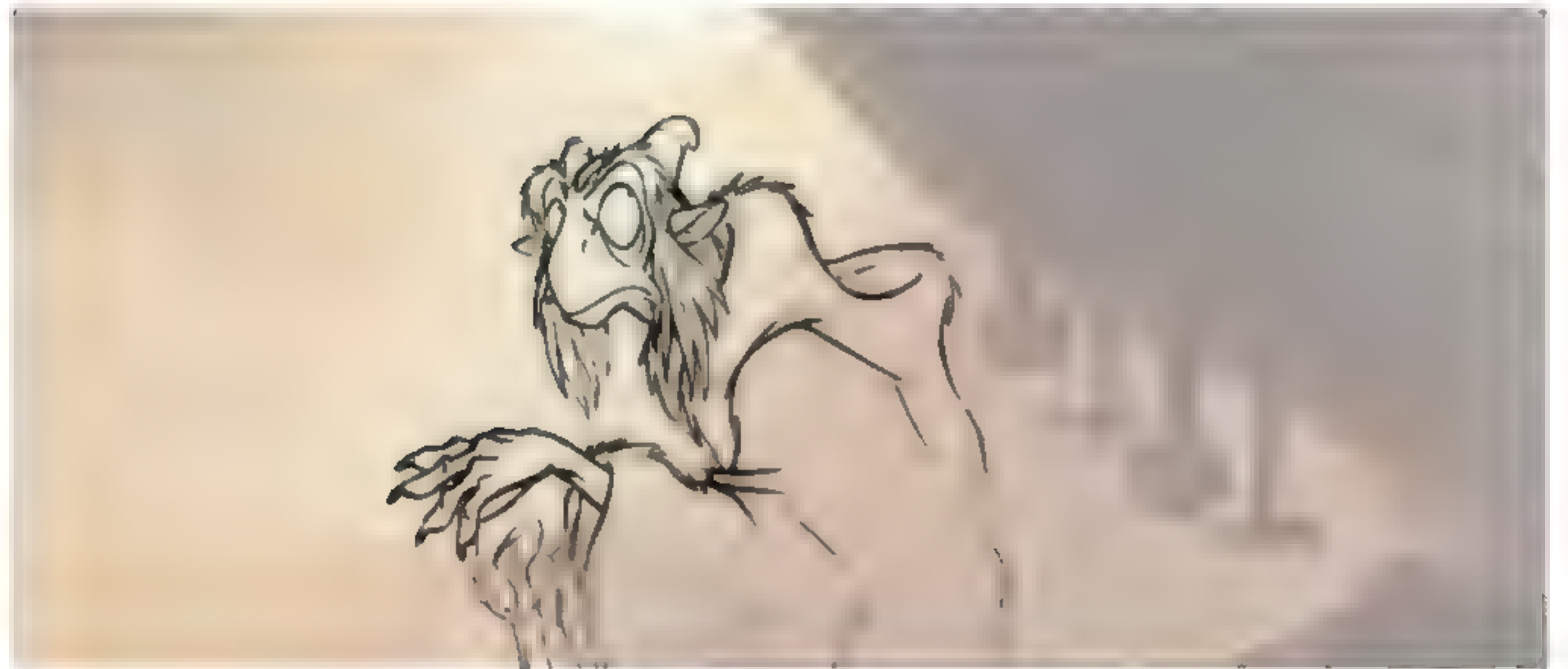
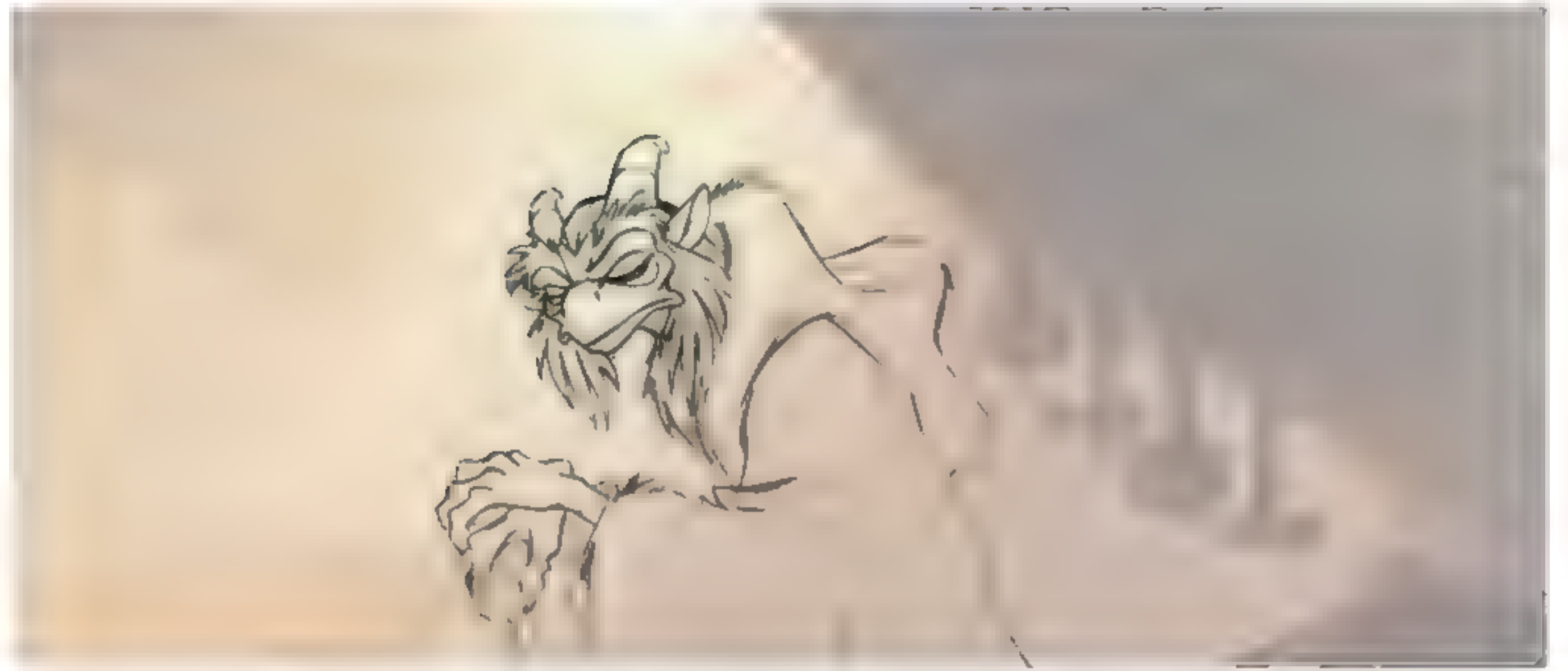
(III)

(I) **MIMÉ.** Figure sketch and walk cycle.

(II) **MIMÉ.**  
Color reference. Drawing by ALEX HESSE. This image served to definitively fix Mimé's design and basic colors for the animation. Depending on the scene, these colors will be altered by the ambient light to integrate the character into the painted background.

(III) **STORYBOARD EXCERPT.**

(IV) **MIMÉ.** Rough animation sequence by ALEX HESSE.



(IV)











Arthur Rackham. 1910



LAURENT KLOETZER | Let's talk a bit about names—always important in imaginary universes. In your book, the sword is never named. The Wälsungen aren't either, nor are Siegfried's mother and father.

# SOUVERCES

ALEX ALICE | I wanted to use as few proper names as possible, in order to stick more closely to archetype. Over the course of the story, I related my version of the Hero's Journey. The Hero faces the double father figure (Odin/Mime), the Monster, the Treasure. I wasn't going for complete abstraction either, but I do have a desire to make things more specifically Nordic or Germanic in order to move toward a purer myth. Even if the referenced universe is clearly Northern European, Iceland, etc.

As for the proper names that *are* there, I kept the ones I found appealing without seeking any particular coherence amongst them. Frankly, I would've liked to keep "Sigurdr," the hero's Nordic name, but it's not as pretty written out in French. Besides, to come back to Siegfried's hair, Sigurdr is brown-haired according to the description in the Völsunga Saga.

I've also simplified the character's genealogy. It's very complex in Wagner and in the Saga. I chose to tell the story of his parents and the story of gold by intertwining them with that of Siegfried. This modification to the script came fairly late, but it allowed me to do away with the last extraneous elements in a fully satisfying way.





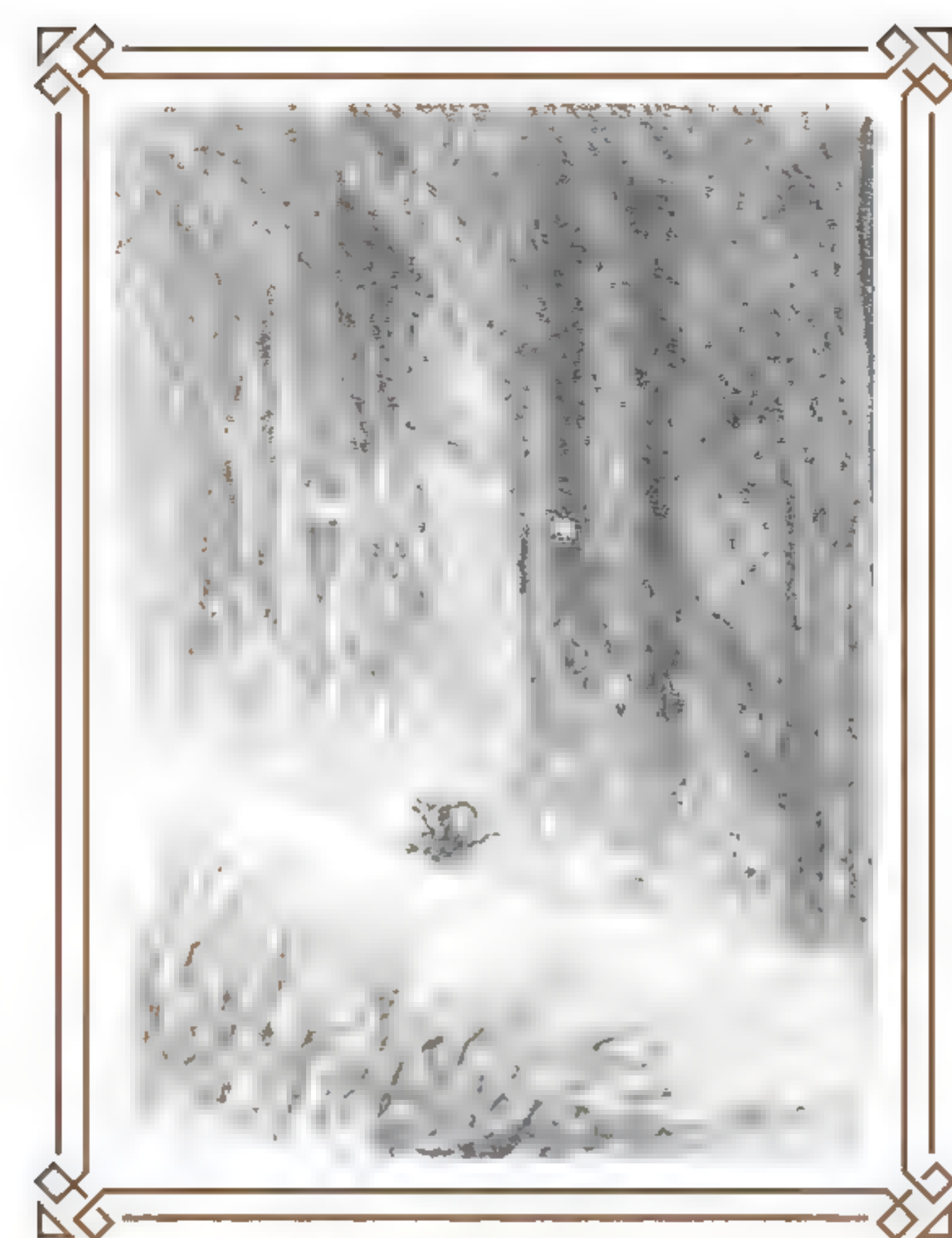
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## LK | What extraneous elements?

AA | In the most interesting version (the one that Wagner salvaged from the *Völsunga Saga*), Siegfried's parents had an incestuous love affair. A strong theme, formidable to handle, but the revelation came to me without warning in the third volume. And it made no sense for Siegfried. Now I had to find a new way to preserve his mother's transgression. In the film script, Siegfried's mother is a Valkyrie. In the end, I decided to resurrect the Guardians of Gold for the book, and to make them one rather than three and make her the hero's mother. The transgression became the fact that she leaves with a mortal and lets Fafnir have the Gold. It's a way of fusing several characters (four, in this case!) to simplify the story and still serve the themes.



(III)

(PAGE 114) VALKYRIE BY ARTHUR RACKHAM, 1911.

Opera libretto illustration.

Created well after Wagner's death, Arthur Rackham's illustrations are closer to the spirit of the libretto than the stage representation. Drawing, still or animated, is capable of giving more substance to a fantastical character than a costumed actor.

(I) **TOWARD THE FORBIDDEN FOREST.**  
Layout sketch by Julien Georgel.

(II) **THE FOREST IN THE SNOW.**  
Layout sketch by Julien Georgel.

(III) **SIEGFRIED IN THE FOREST.**  
First sketch of a moment of happiness.





(I)



(II)



(III)



(IV)





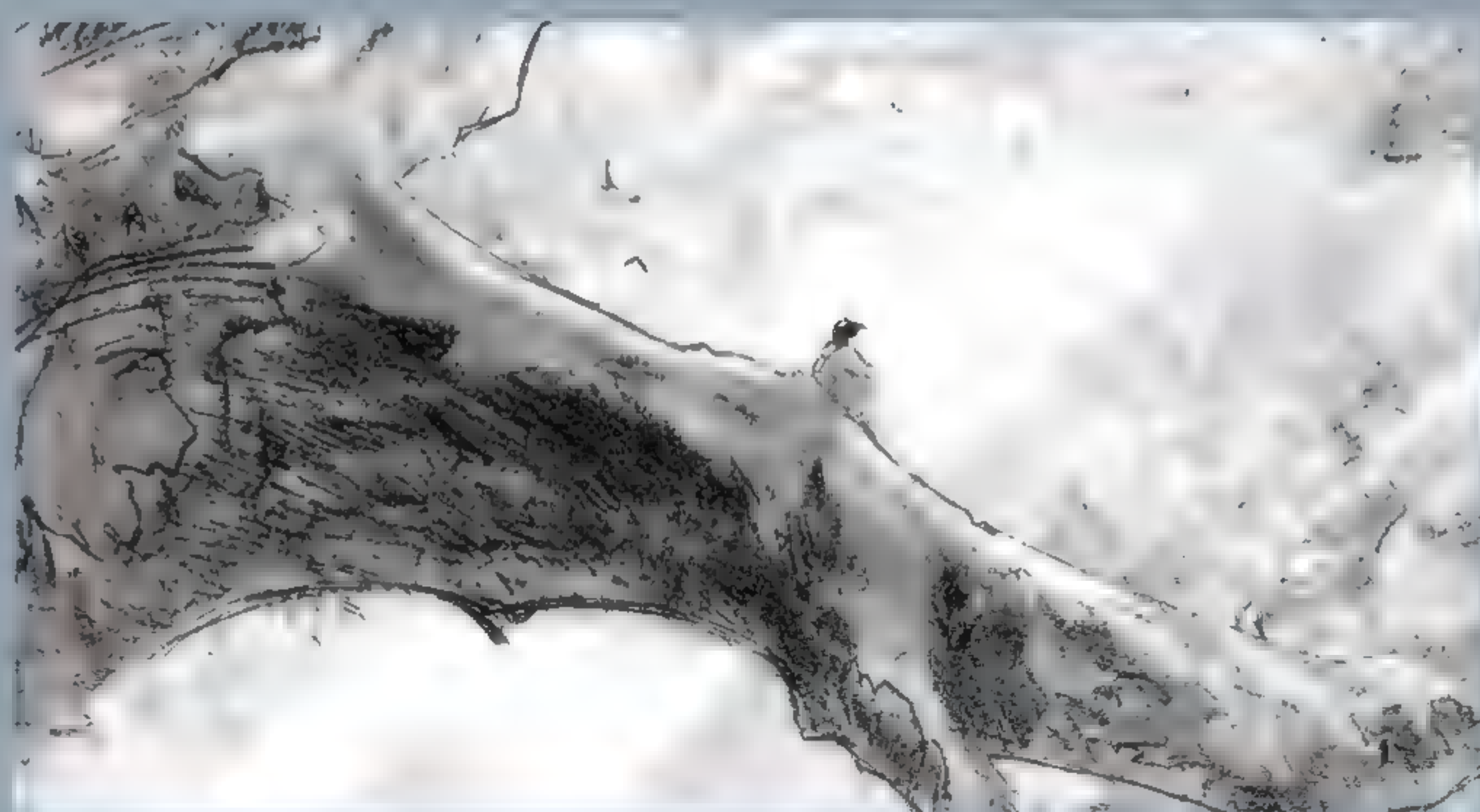
LK | Is this kind of simplification a painful act?

AA | My biggest problem working on an adaptation is my attachment to the original material. I have a certain humility in regard to the subject I'm dealing with; I feel like I'm handling things far larger than myself, and I want to respect them. If there are elements I don't understand, it doesn't mean they're not interesting, or should be excised. There's a struggle between dramatic necessity and respect for the myth. So when I cut or modify these passages, I try to make sure to the best of my abilities that it doesn't harm the meaning or the symbolism of the story.

LK | Now let's tackle your personal sources outside Norse mythology. Stéphane Marsen, Acquisitions Editor at Éditions Bragelonne, once suggested to me the concept of "the reader's path." These are books read during childhood and adolescence that durably fashion our imagination, whether they're good or bad. What are the elements of your reader's path that have influenced Siegfried?

AA | Wagner, certainly. Then *The Lord of the Rings*, enormously. The Elric books by Michael Moorcock too,

particularly for the very personal relationship between Elric and the gods. They're teen reading, but the end of the Elric Cycle has remained an absolutely gigantic thing for me. I didn't read a lot of fantasy, because after *The Lord of the Rings*, everything felt dull.



The Ardennes

Arise

The Prince of the Forest

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare









UK | Given your field, let's talk a little about comics...

AA | In comics, my goal is to be "somewhere between *Slaine* and *Bone*." *Slaine*, by Mills and Bisely, is a retelling of the Celtic legends that came out at the beginning of 1980s, totally uninhibited from a graphic point of view, at once very powerful and very intelligent in its handling of mythology. Jeff Smith's *Bone* presents a joyous mélange of genres, and a very funny use of rhythm and ellipsis. Graphically, the form is very clear and clean. The two have almost no overlap, so I try very hard to find some common ground!

UK | And films?

AA | "Between *Excalibur* and *The Jungle Book*!" *Excalibur* had an enormous impact on me. I didn't see it in a theater, but my two older brothers had already seen it while I was traveling. When I landed, they were falling all over themselves. "*Excalibur*! It's great, there are these crows that eat dead people's eyes!" It was one of the films I had very high expectations for. It's never let me down. I discovered it on video and there, it was an absolute shock; it matched the heights of my dreams. *Excalibur*'s score centers around Siegfried's "Funeral March," which serves as the main theme and is used in an absolutely remarkable way. We hear it in part several times: at the beginning of the film, its opening is used as the dawn of time theme. Then the next part is used as the sword *Excalibur*'s theme, and the piece is heard again in its entirety at the end.

It's tremendous. For me, it approaches myth, all that is powerful, romantic, timeless. I love the whole film, and the end approaches the sublime; it's never been done better!

For fantasy, I also think, of course, about Milius' *Conan* and *The Thirteenth Warrior* by John McTiernan, a great film massacred by its screenwriter/producer. On the lighter side, the films that marked me tremendously are also films from that pivotal age. I saw *The Dark Crystal* in theaters. I was 8 years old, but I did everything I could to see it because I'd seen photos from the film in *Mad Movies*!



For me, drawing the character as a child was one of the greatest challenges of this book. I'd never done it! In the beginning, I'd imagined child Siegfried from adult Siegfried, keeping his hairdo, his hooked nose (not easy on a child), and his simple clothing. The character design evolved a lot over the course of work on the animated film, and then the book. He moved through lots of ages, before being fixed around 7-8 years old.

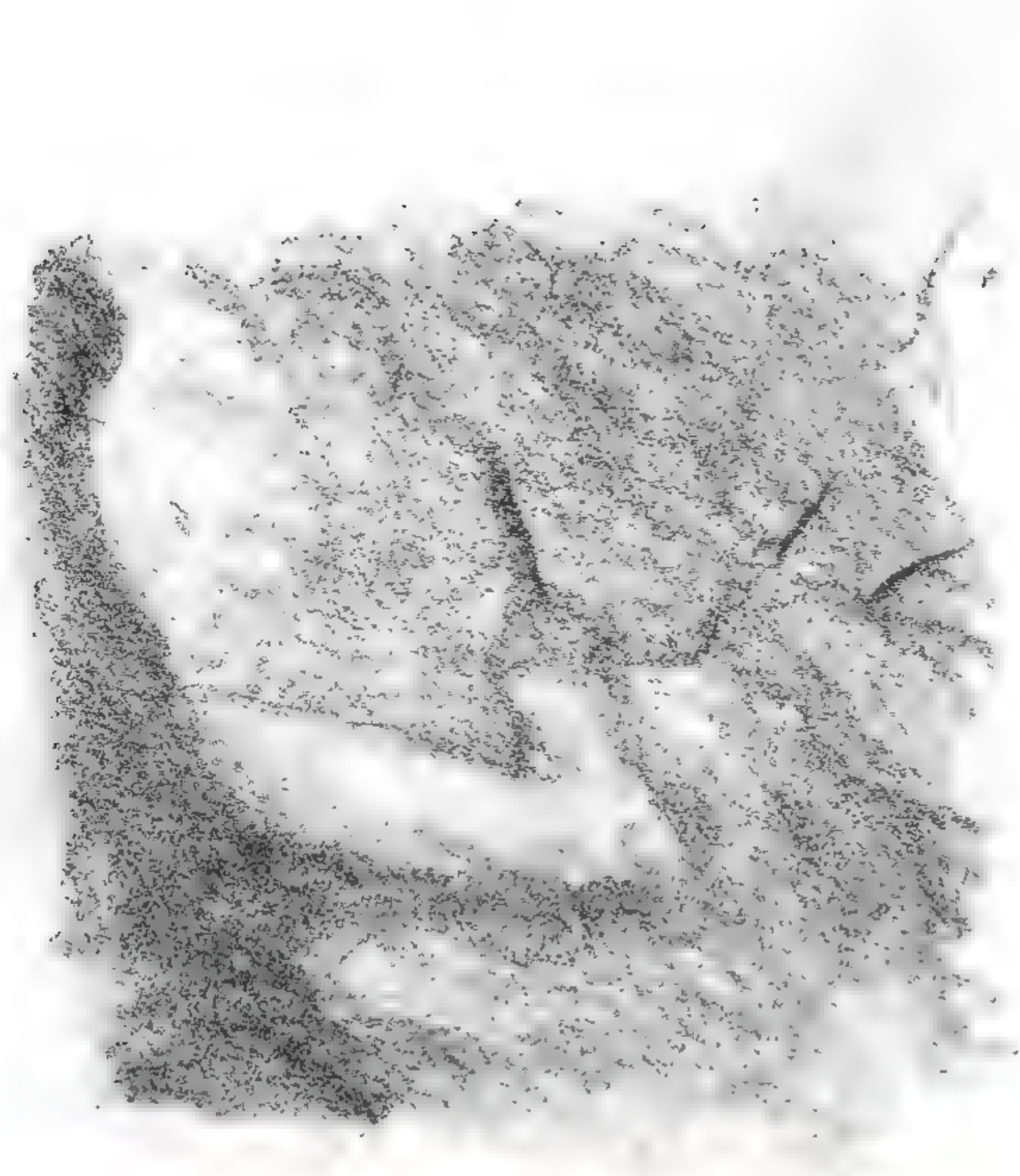
(I) CHILD SIEGFRIED, by Habib Louati and Alex Alice.

(II) ROUGH ANIMATION TEST, by Habib Louati.





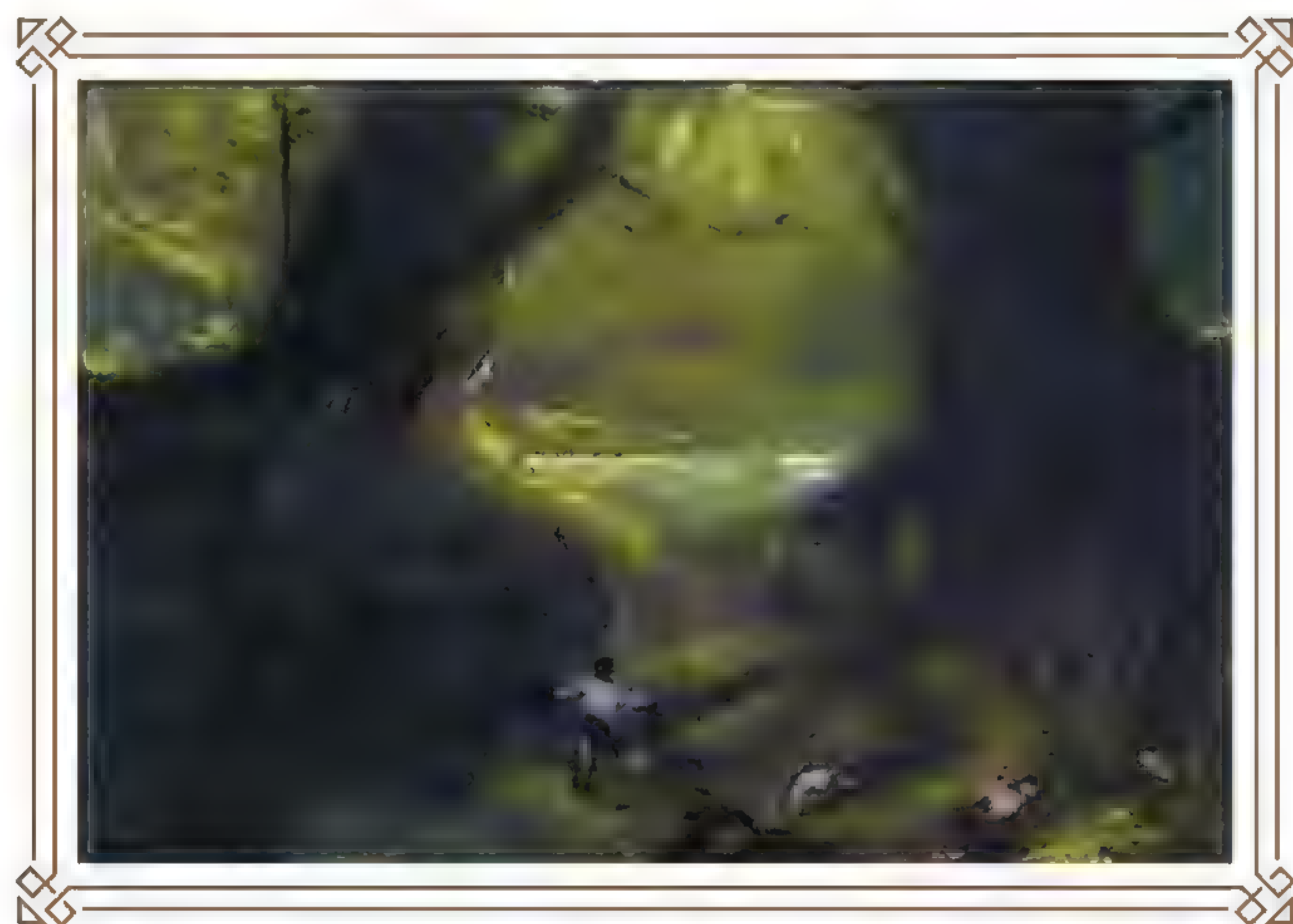




(II)



(III)



(IV)

- (I) **SIEGFRIED.** *Pose sketch*
- (II) **THE FOREST.** *Atmosphere sketch.*
- (III) **THE FORGE IN SPRING.** *Atmosphere sketch. Pastel, 16x7 cm.*
- (IV) **THE POOL.** *Atmosphere sketch. Pastel, 16x14 cm.*





UK | Your Nibelungs look a lot like—

AA | The Mystics from *The Dark Crystal*, clearly, even if they have nothing in common personality-wise. And the warped version of a Nibelung, the dragon Fafnir, corresponds with the Skeksis.

UK | And Ridley Scott's *Legend*?

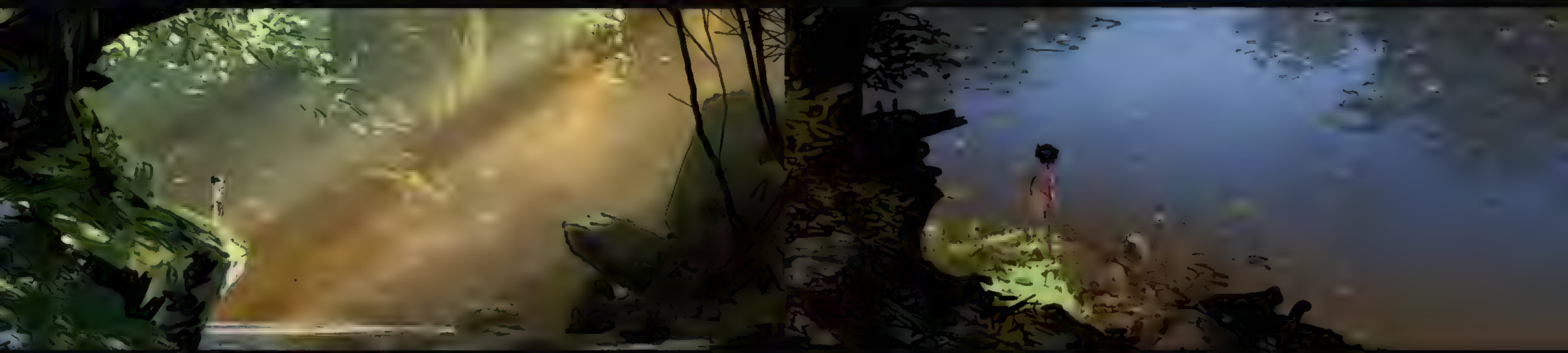
AA | I saw it at about the same age, in theaters. An aesthetic shock I'll never get over. But the screenplay's terrible. Ridley Scott went to the screenwriter and said: "I want a fantasy narrative where the bad guy's named Darkness." That's all he got. The movie is a Fabergé egg; very beautiful and completely hollow. On the other hand, *Legend* nears absolute heights with its incredible formal beauty. Especially the forest. I've always loved the forest, walks in the woods. After *Legend*, I had a big problem because I tried to find a forest like the one in the film. Until I realized, growing up, that the whole thing had been created in a studio. Ridley Scott made the forest. The trees are gigantic, the air is charged, the filtered light is superb. There are mushrooms, tall grasses, things floating in the air... It's magnificent, and it doesn't exist. But it touches on archetypes. Visually, and where the hero's concerned. I found him a very successful version of the wild young prince, even if he makes a lot of people smirk. And the villain, Darkness, is one of the most beautiful devils I've seen.

UK | And on the animation side? Disney?

AA | Certainly, but especially *The Secret of NIMH*. For me, it was the first animated film that seemed to point toward something beyond itself. There was real magic in it, people who fought with swords, and the dead. All while remaining completely animal and childlike. Its mixture of story and media aimed at children but treating of more lasting things, things we don't tell children, is the basis for my Siegfried project. In *The Secret of NIMH*, the scene where they descend into the rats' home is visually unparalleled. Golden Age Disney, like *Bambi* and *The Jungle Book*, had a particularly visual influence. *Bambi* for the sumptuous and very suggestive treatment of scenery, something I aspire to. And *Sleeping Beauty*, the opposite. Very stylized, precise, especially its human characters. Magnificent.

UK | Some things in your book are foreign to Wagnerian sources. The whole bit with the wolves, for example. Where does that come from? In Wagner, we only saw a bear!

UK | I kept a bear in the script for a very long time, but not in the same role as the wolves. I'd wanted to establish a rapport between child Siegfried and the animals. I thought of wolves because Siegfried's father, Siegmund, was also called "son of the wolf." The wolves came from work on the myth, not from *The Jungle Book* as people might think.







AA | The animals represent the forest, and the relationship between Siegfried and the wolves is a kind of rehearsal for events that will happen next.

UK | **Speaking of the forest, why does Mimé live in a tree?**

AA | In Wagner, Mimé lives in a cave, the usual choice for someone who lives underground. But Mimé is an exile, rejected by his kin, far from his domain. That's the first reason I put him in a tree. The second is because the book's climax is the forging of the sword. It's not just any sword, but The Sword, melted by lightning, tempered in the downpour, made by the elements. I needed a house that drew lightning at the end.

UK | **Mimé's house is fantasmagorical. It has something of a hobbit hole about it, with its little round windows. It's at once Dantesque and homey.**

AA | Naturally, because my first image of Mimé's house was that of a thatched cottage in the woods, like in fairy tales. I started with that before I fully understood that Mimé would never build anything cozy. He loves smithing more than anything else. He doesn't care about comfort. The only comfortable part is Siegfried's corner, the refuge he's made. And even there, Siegfried has no curtains for his window, or a nice thatched roof.

But there is one silly element, I'll admit: the house has a window. You could say it's a window oriented so that the sun can't get in, but, in theory, there shouldn't be a window at all. Still, it's nicer with a window. You could think of it as a concession that Mimé made to Siegfried.

UK | **We've talked about the forest, the influence of *Legend*. Were there other impacts? Other landscape influences?**

AA | Yes, the romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich. And also the Hudson River School, a school of American landscape painters who wandered around the West making monumental landscapes: Frederic Church, Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Cole, among others. These were canvases 3 or 4 yards wide, packed with detail. And they were complete romantics. What with the sky meeting the earth, the mountains crossing the clouds and forming fantastical landscapes...

For the forest, I looked a lot at Shishkin, a Russian painter of the same period. Amongst other graphic influences, I'd also cite Wagner's illustrators: Franz Stassen, Arthur Rackham. And then John Howe, Frazetta...



THE FOREST. Atmosphere sketch. Digital.  
Photoshop is a great tool for color sketching, but pastels are still better. They don't require any additional technical skill (you only need your fingers!), and give a more beautiful texture with richer colors.







LK | I'm going to cite Robert Howard, the creator of Conan, in a famous letter to Clark Ashton Smith. He says of his story "Red Nails": *"I merely portrayed what I honestly believe would be the reactions of certain types of people in the situations on which the plot of the story hung. It may sound fantastic to link the term 'realism' with Conan; but as a matter of fact—his supernatural adventures aside—he is the most realistic character I ever evolved. He is simply a combination of a number of men I have known."*

Realism in the most unbridled fantasy. What do you say?

AA | Siegfried is probably the most realistic character in the book, because I needed to enter the story through him. All the others are archetypes, and naturally they're the most interesting characters. Mimé isn't realistic at all. But Siegfried reacts normally to extraordinary situations. He's not a very strong character. He's there to move the story along and experience extraordinary situations. He's a surrogate character, more like Luke Skywalker than Conan or even Frodo, that's for sure.

LK | And your relationship to superheroes?

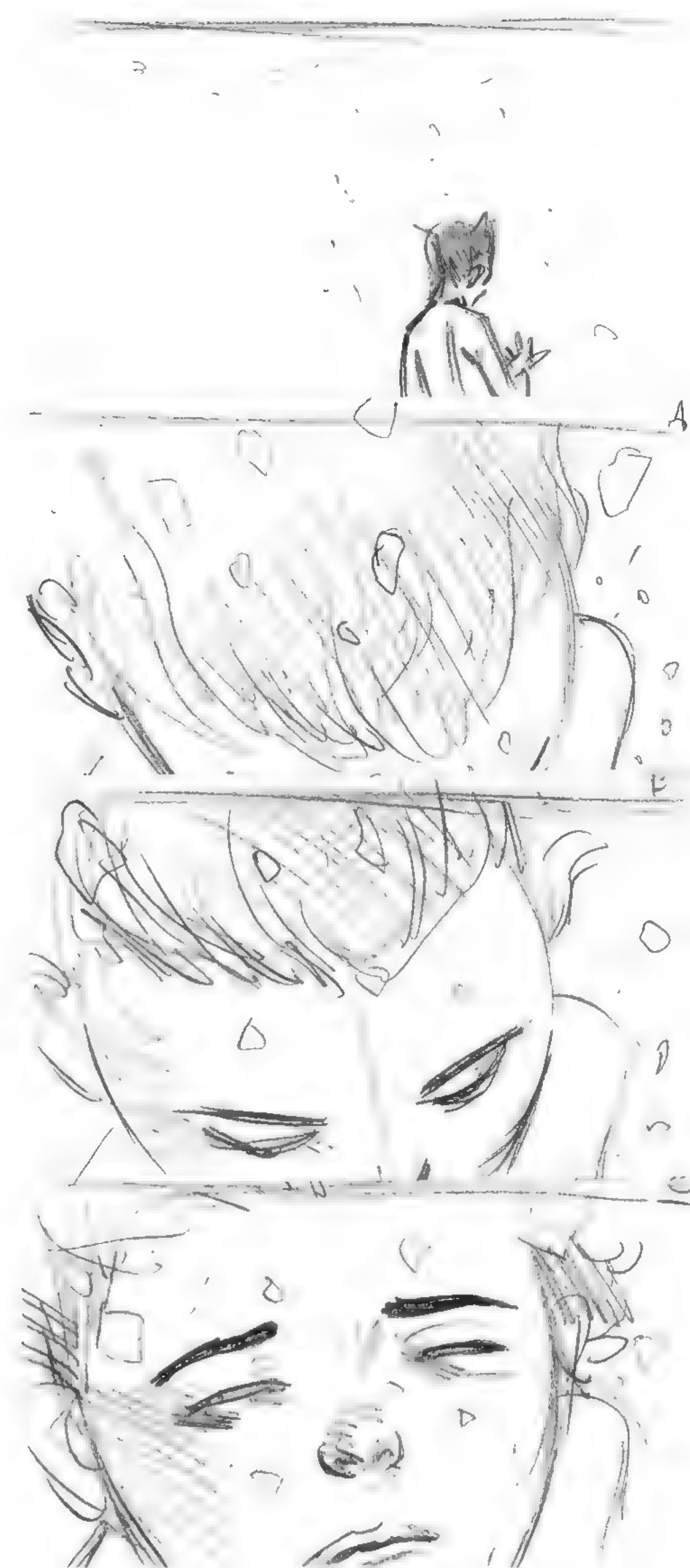
AA | I never dressed up like a superhero when I was young. I established an embargo on skin-tight red and green costumes. Except Batman, because Batman was well dressed! What he wore was mysterious, a little fantastic in some ways, a little frightening, but never ridiculous. Then again, even if *The Dark Knight Returns* is one of the biggest comics in the word, I can't complain when Miller removes the costumes (literally) to make *300*.

LK | In this book, you tell a story of childhood. The story of a boy who plays in the forest. Does this feed on a personal experience?

AA | Was I raised in the forest by wolves? No.

LK | But telling a childhood story is rarely an innocent act.

AA | Indeed.



EXCERPT FROM THE STORYBOARD FOR THE ANIMATED FILM.

A certain number of film sequences were translated directly into the comic (here, Page 37). On the other hand, sometimes the differences between the mediums required a different treatment, or even a re-write of the same scene





**OF THE SEMBLANCE AND ARRAY OF SIGURD, FAFNIR'S BANE**  
EXCERPT FROM THE VÖLSUNGA SAGA

"...Whenas folk tell of all the mightiest champions, and the noblest chiefs, then ever is he named the foremost, and his name goes wide about on all tongues north of the sea of the Greek-lands, and even so shall it be while the world endures. Now the hair of this Sigurd was golden-red of hue, fair of fashion, and falling down in great locks; thick and short was his beard, and of no other colour, high-nosed he was, broad and high-boned of face; so keen were his eyes, that few durst gaze up under the brows of him; his shoulders were as broad to look on as the shoulders of two; most duly was his body fashioned betwixt height and breadth, and in such wise as was seemliest; and this is the sign told of his height, that when he was girt with his sword Gram, which same was seven spans long, as he went through the full-grown rye-fields, the dew-shoe of the said sword smote the ears of the standing corn."

TRANSLATION BY WILLIAM MORRIS AND EIRIKR MAGNUSSON









LAURENT KLOFTZER | Let's talk now about the more generic problems related to writing a story. What's your experience as a screenwriter? And as a creator of stories?

## SAGAS

ALEX ALICE | My first completed scripts were *The Third Testament* books, which I co-wrote with Xavier Dorison. Before that, I'd wanted to tell stories, but I couldn't choose which ones!

When I met Xavier, we really got along with one another and set out after lots of leads and ideas. As soon as he hit on the idea for *The Third Testament*, I was hooked.

Then there was an installment of *Tomb Raider*. With Patrick Pion, we wanted to start a series about Lara Croft, something light that I felt close to and really enjoyed. But it all stopped before it started because the rights for the character were poorly managed. The book was pulled from shelves after some success, and never followed up on. It's sad, because I had really liked the idea of doing a light-hearted adventure series with a story each time, *Spirou*-style. Too bad.

Then I worked on *Siegfried*, the books and the film, then on a roman epic, a prequel to *The Third Testament : Julius*. I just finished writing book two.





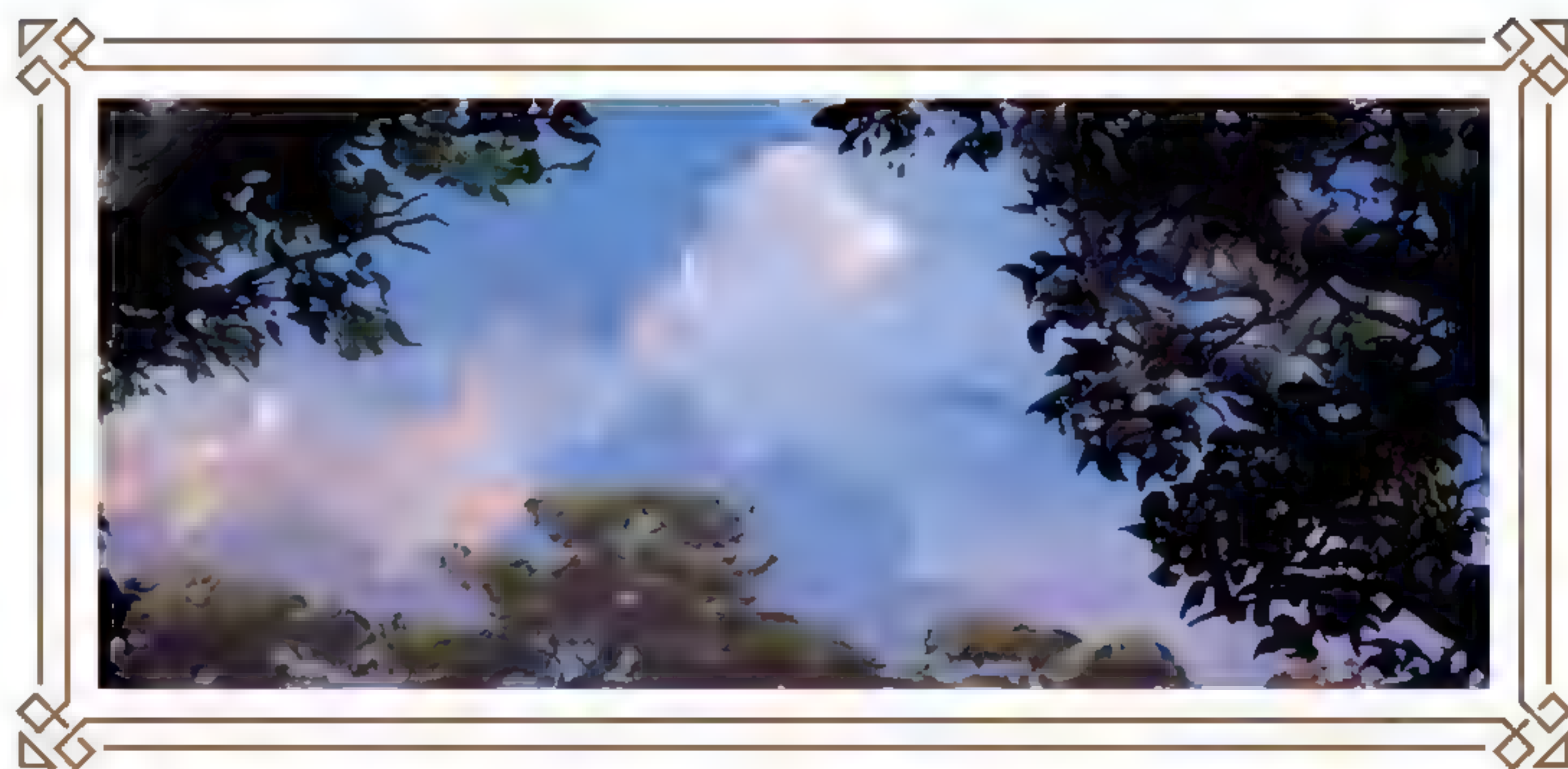
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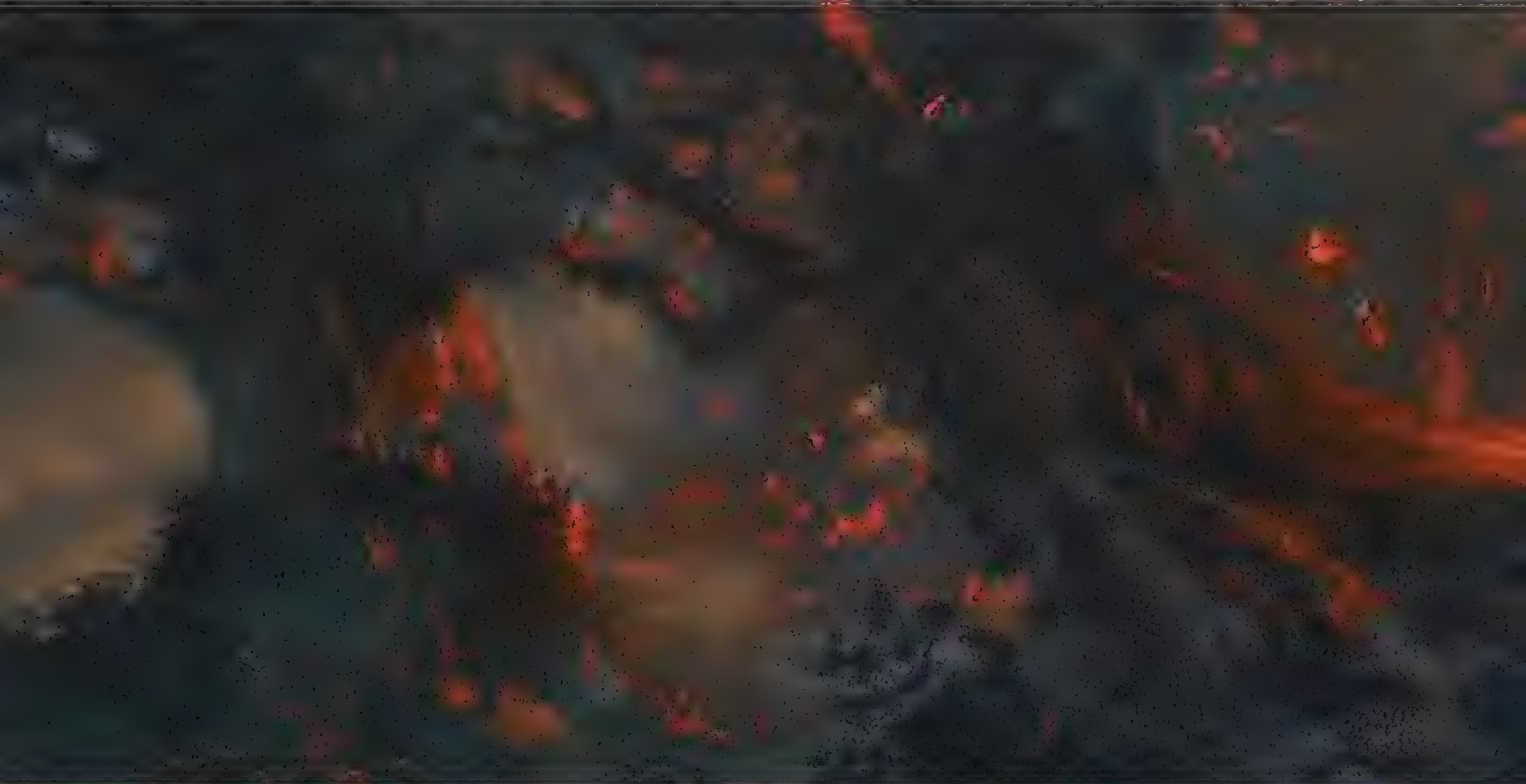
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LK | Does telling stories interest you? It's clear you love developing a world, evoking a myth...

AA | Telling stories is the part that interests me the most, even more than coming up with them.



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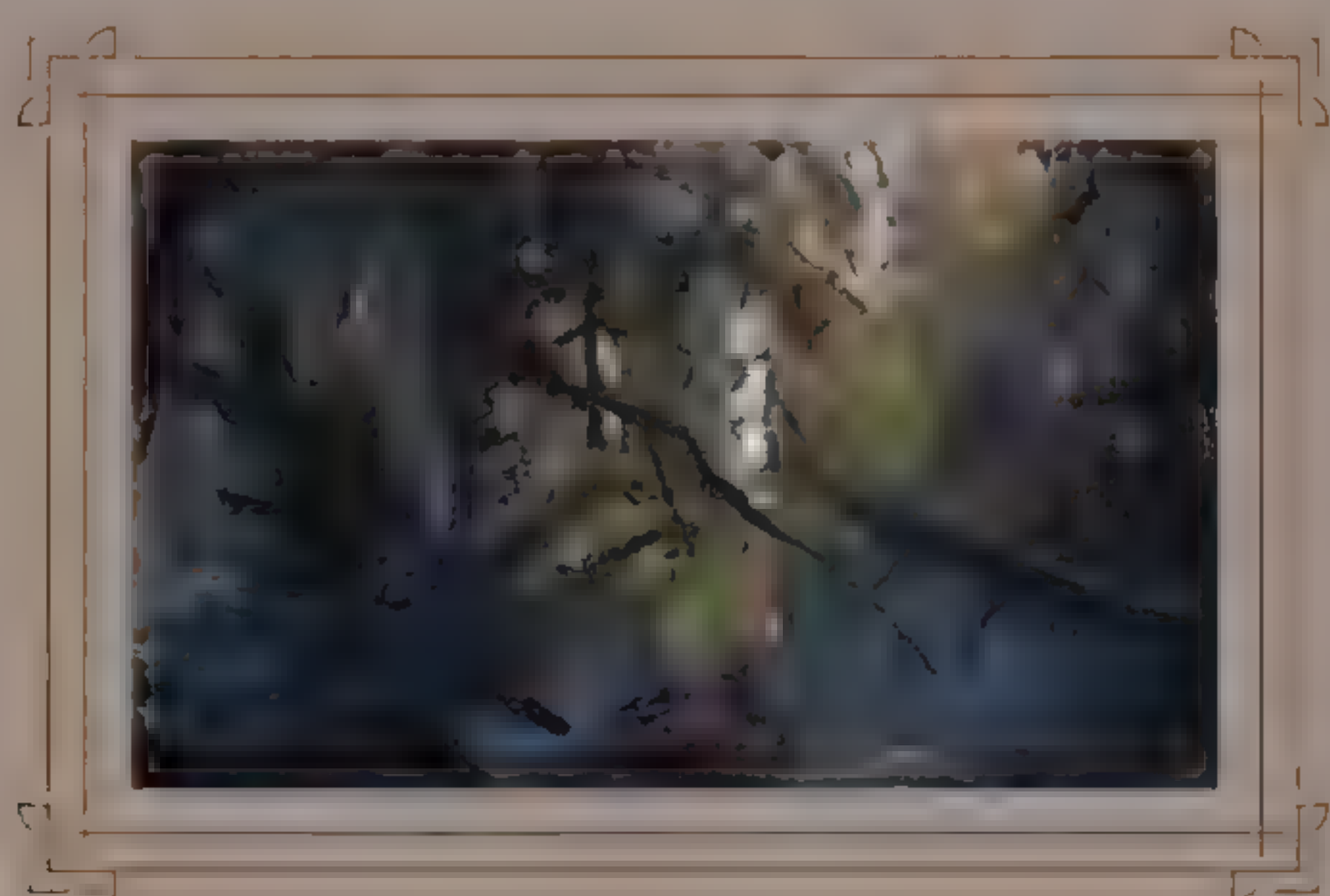
LK | When I start a new novel, I have a certain number of images in my head, powerful things I know have to make it into the finished novel if it's going to match up at all with what I really want to do. For example, in my book *The Wounded Kingdom*, even before I started, I had the image of a naked king on a horse underneath a hazy sky, charging, sword in hand, against an army of the dead. That was one of my founding images.

AA | I totally agree with that way of looking at things. For me, it's up to the writer and dramatic technique to bridge the gap between those moments in a way that highlights them as much as possible.

(PAGE 130) WOTAN, the Germanic Odin, by Arthur Rackham. 1911. Illustration from the opera libretto.

- (I) THE HUNT (I). Pencil sketch, digitally enhanced. Photo reference. When there's not enough time for a sketch.
- (II) UNDERGROWTH KNOWN AS "DES GALTIER." Photo reference. When there's not enough time for a sketch.
- (III) THE FOREST. Atmosphere sketch. Pastel, 16x9 cm.
- (IV) THE FOREST. Atmosphere sketch. Pastel, 12x7 cm.



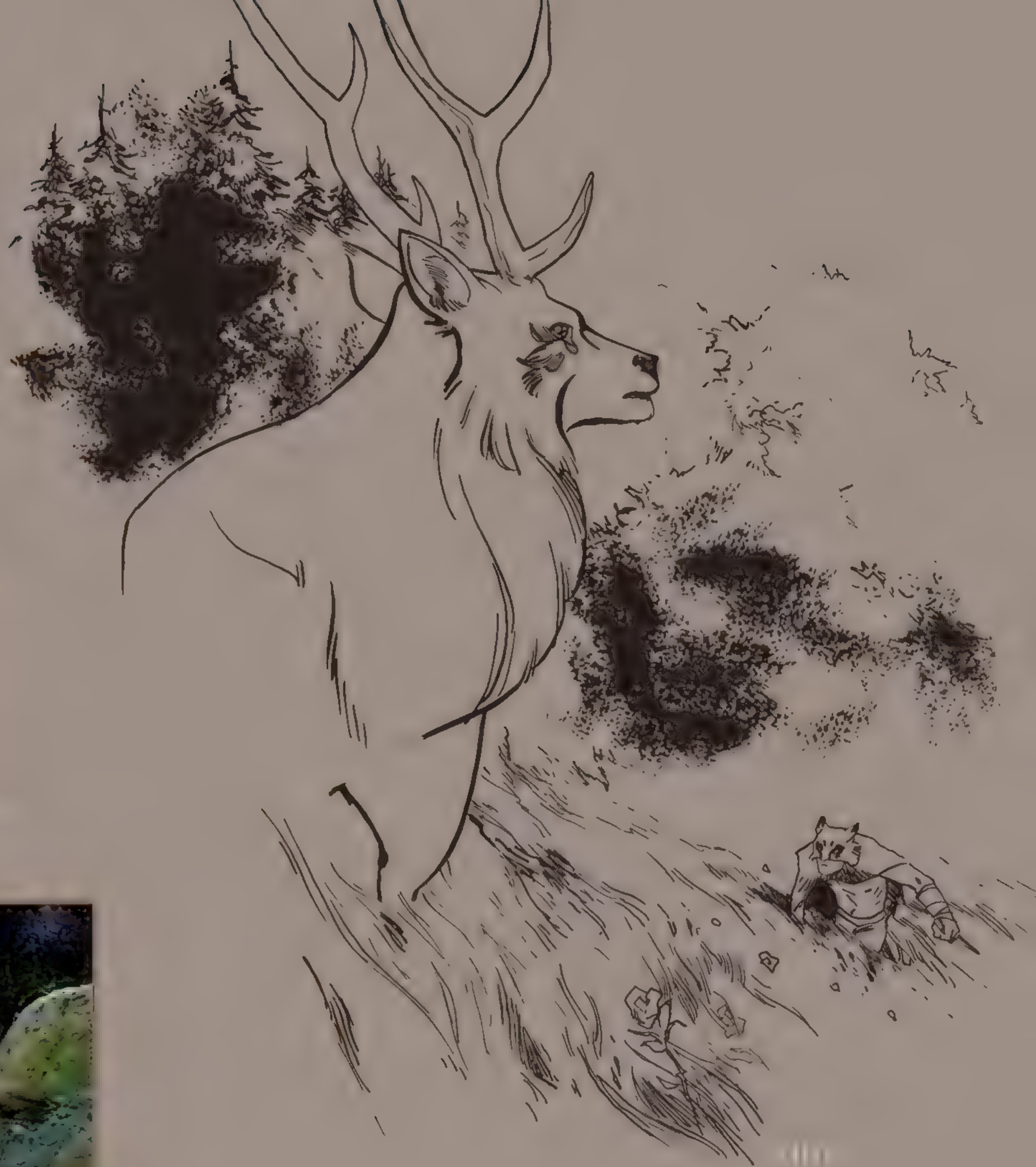


**LK | What are the founding images of Book 1?**

**AA |** The lovers in the snow, killed by Odin. I think that much is clear: I took ten pages to describe it, instead of one!

There's also the child Siegfried finding his parents' sword. And the riddle contest between Mimé and Odin, a totally juicy moment in the opera that I absolutely had to keep.

And, just after that, the part with the forging of the sword. An episode of triumph for the hero, who finds his power, but also a counterpoint to the moment where Mimé resolves to murder Siegfried. At that moment, Siegfried is truly breaking traditions, represented in their inflexibility by Mimé. And in this act of liberation lie the seeds of their destruction.



**LK | And the scene with the vision of the Valkyrie, the woman bending over the child?**

**AA |** True, that's also a founding image, long in coming. It was a dream I had as a child.

**LK | Among other places I find the breath, the lifeblood of a story is in pieces of music.**

**AA |** Me too. Some pieces conjure these visions, specific emotions we want to transcribe to other media. There are certain pieces that I hold on to without listening to them, until the moment I work on the scene, since music can get quickly overplayed. Listening to a piece too much can make the feelings it inspires more like a memory, like a photo of an actual event.

**LK | You've spent time with Siegfried and Mimé. Do they have a life outside your story? Have your characters ever surprised you?**

**AA |** In this story, sadly, no. Their destiny was given to me in advance. I know what's going to happen to them; I try to make the characters stick to what the legend had in store for them.



**UK** | And yet certain gestures betray the characters' realness. For example, the careless way Mimé tosses the rat into the bowl, Siegfried's gesture of victory over the wolves... At such moments, the characters seem very alive.

**AA** | It's the kind of thing that endears a story and its characters to you. That's why I have an hour-by-hour timetable of what Siegfried and Mimé do at the forge. They have a life outside of what's shown: I know where Mimé's mine is, why he settled where he did, who makes the charcoal fire. And since I worked for a very long time on the script and made several versions, I know how Mimé reacts when he sees Siegfried for the first time, how he devises a way to use him.



**UK** | A question now about the history of the project: I find it interesting that we're faced with a case study of the relationship between comics and cinema. What are the differences between the two scripts?

**AA** | You see a film in one sitting. By contrast, reading three books might be more spaced out. I wanted three chapters that were satisfying in and of themselves. Which was a challenge, particularly for the first installment. That meant I had to put stakes into play at the beginning that were resolved by the end of the book, and not create expectations that would be disappointed.

*To render Siegfried as an animated character, I tried, with Mathieu Lauffray and animator Antoine Antin, to toughen up the character, give him a simpler, more recognizable outline. In the comic, Siegfried is semi-realistic (the face is a standardization of a very few traits). In the animated film, the same design seems extremely realistic and represents a challenge. Animators who are able to give life to this kind of character are admirable for their mastery of drawing, movement, and performance.*

(I) **THE FOREST.** Atmosphere sketch. Pastel 16x24 cm.

(II) **THE UNDERGROUND TOWN AS "DEN GAUFREU"** (II). Photographic reference.

(III) **THE HUNT (II).** Attempt at inks.

(IV) **ALONE (III).** Modeling by Mathieu Lauffray.









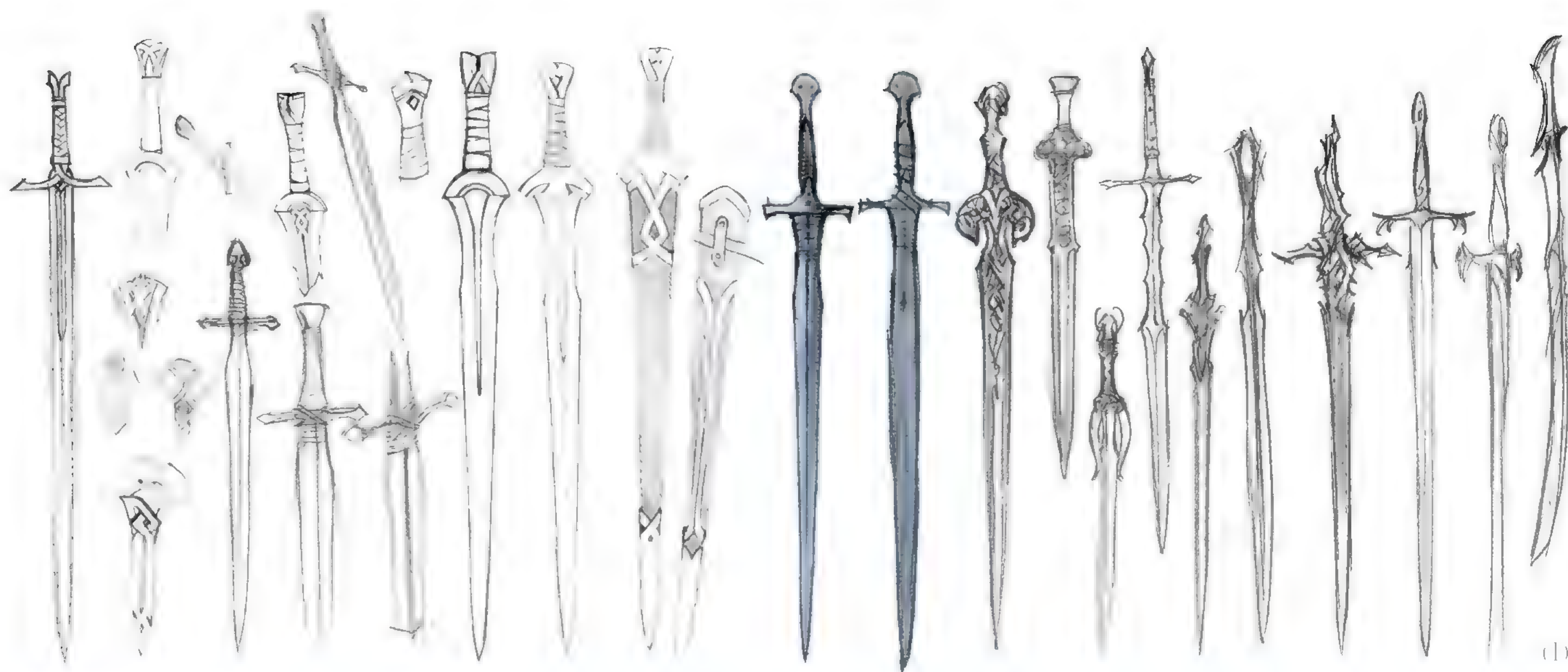
I tried, but it was really hard to entirely avoid the usual frustrations many comics readers have with first installments. Besides the format, the other big difference in terms of writing was dialogue. In the film, I tried to convey as many things as possible through visuals and music. Music is of paramount importance in film, and that's even truer of animated films aimed at children and a mass audience: the less you say in dialogue, the better. So I cut out as much dialogue as I could, and ended up with a screenplay that wasn't very loquacious, which was my goal.

You can do this in comics too, but conveying information visually takes a lot of space, a lot of pages. I started the book with a silent sequence that took nine pages. I can't afford that luxury all the time. Generally, a silent panel is a panel that's skipped over. Words slow the reading at necessary junctures. And so the comic script had more dialogue, thanks largely to its narrator: the Völva. Very early on in the writing process, I started casting around for a narrator, thought I had one for a while, then decided against it.









(1)



(11)

Having a narrator in this type of fantasy story really is a cliché.

In *The Third Testament*, we chose a fairly classic narrator, which made sense in the context of a historical tale.

But with *Siegfried*, I want to tell a mythical story. And given how it ends, I had a hard time finding a retrospective narrator.

Until I got the idea to tell the story through the Völva and the Valkyries. That allowed for a livelier tale in dialogue. And I could tie up each book in a different way, keeping surprises in store for Volumes 2 and 3. That was the final script idea that allowed me to tie up Volume 1.

(1) I had a hard time linking the design of the sword to a precise historical period. First I tried to design a blade antique in shape, with a medieval guard. But the classic medieval guard's very linked to Christian knights. I wanted a more pre-Christian shape. I opted for a sort of antique broadsword with a half-moon guard decorated with Norse inspired patterns. The last on the right are Mimes failed attempts.

(11) **AMONGST THE WOLVES.** Atmosphere sketch. Digital









(PAGE 140) **SIEGFRIED.** Cover illustration for the standard edition.  
Acrylic-vinyl and digital.

- (I) **FIRST SIEGFRIED.**
- (II) **THE DESIGN GETS MORE SPECIFIC FOR ANIMATION.** For the pilot, he was redone by Antoine Antin, who also animated Odin.
- (III) **A MORE STYLIZED ATTEMPT.** For a single character, the possible drawing styles are almost endless.
- (IV) **SKETCHES BY MATHIEU LAUFFRAY.**





(11)

(12)





The question of music remains. In cinema, they say the ear is the brain's sidedoor, the service entrance. We don't really notice what goes through it.... When things are done well, emotions move through in an unconscious way. We're anticipating a lot of sound work for the film. There'll be many scenes based on music. In comics, the equivalent of music is maybe colors. Just as with music, when it's done well, there's an emotional message that draws its power from the fact that we don't consciously perceive it.

**KK | In your opinion, how much story can be told in one volume of a comic? For me, for example, the narrative content of a film is generally closer more to a short story (a single narrative arc) than a novel. How about comics?**

**AA |** Naturally, it depends on the format. For me, with the traditional form (a 50 page volume), three volumes equals a movie.

In *Siegfried*, I used a denser text/image balance than in *The Third Testament*. With the kind of narration in *The Third Testament*, *Siegfried* would be 46 pages. I took more space, I focused on the characters, I developed their scenes to give them more importance. I didn't want to make do with just giving information. In comics, you can try to create emotion in a way specific to the medium: playing with ellipsis, gutters, page breaks, varying image size. But all that is space-intensive!

**KK | Two more technical questions: this volume is claustrophobic. The space is very limited, the characters are few. Was that a constraint for you?**

**AA |** It wasn't a problem. I like the situation and the setting. And there's enough space in the opening, and the dialogue between Mimé and Odin, to suggest a vaster universe. I was committed to making sure that the Siegfried side of things started small, in a confined space. The forest is a prison for him, all vertical lines... We never see the sky until he decides to leave the forest. It's a claustrophobic environment, but a vast one! I hope it offers enough spectacular and unusual backdrops.

I wanted to recount the little closed circuit of childhood. If Siegfried stays there, he'll ossify, become an animal or even a Nibelung. He cannot become a man in that place because the environment imposes alienating mental structures on him. To understand the adult Siegfried's power, I needed to stage his childhood.

(I) **MIMÉ'S ANVIL.** Set element painting by Patrice Suaud.

(II) **COVER SKETCH.**







**LK** | You did the first version of the synopsis in January 2002. You finished drawing the first book in 2007. Was it difficult spending five years with the same story, the same characters? How did you keep the subject fresh in your head for such a long time?

**AA** | I noted down some of the things that really interested me in the story and went back to them a few times. And I'd plunge back into pieces of music, the cinematic moments. But I'm so completely at the heart of what I want to be doing; I had such fun dealing with this subject.

I work in stages: the writing phase is very long and I don't let myself draw while I'm in it. Then I do the storyboard for the comic in one fell swoop. I had great fun creating images of the things I'd had in my head for so long.

Then I like to refine the same story, pass it through a sieve. Go back, sculpt it. Sometimes you cut off pieces you shouldn't; it's one of the risks. That's why I don't work on too many subjects at the same time. I want to best serve the subject I'm dealing with.

Screenplay revisions are sometimes a nightmare, but it's exciting to finalize a new version that says the same thing in a stronger, more concise way, or one more suited to the medium.

**LK** | Some stories, like yours, have grand themes (a boy becoming a man, or his relationship with his father). Is the theme the product of the story for you? Or is it necessary to identify it and build the story from it?

**AA** | I don't ask the question of theme right away. I start work on a story, and after a while, the theme emerges. If it emerges all by itself and becomes clear, that's fine, like with *The Third Testament*. With *Siegfried*, the work was a bit longer, due to the richness of the myth and its different incarnations. In general, the way you wrap up a story determines its point. With *Siegfried*, I tried not to insist too much on the theme. It's a myth, not a fable. It's not the opinion of a single man, but the reflection of a civilization that gave birth to it and passed it on.

**LK** | If you could travel back to meet the Alex Alice of 2002 who'd just begun work on the script, what would you say to him to save him time?

**AA** | I'd give him the formula for time travel to go see 2009 Alex Alice. That one seems to know what he's doing.

A new illustrated discussion will accompany the next *Siegfried*, in the special edition of Volume Two: *The Valkyrie*.





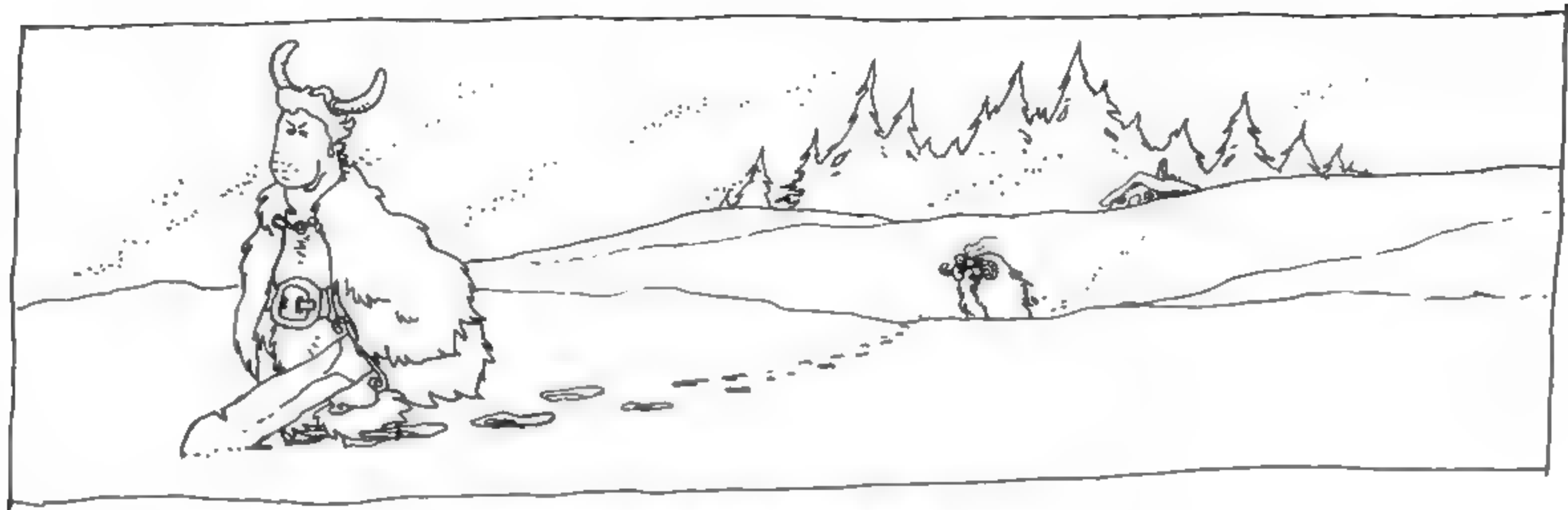




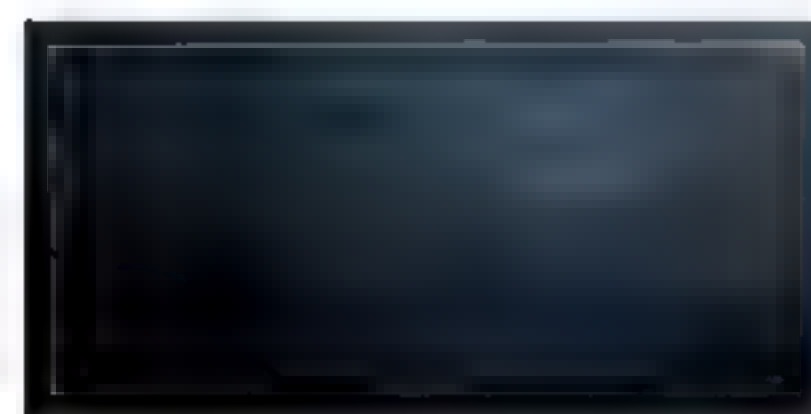


TO BE CONTINUED...





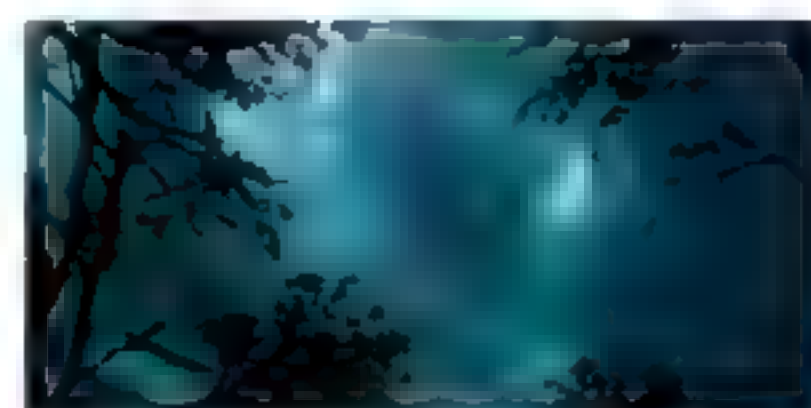
# Le ZIGFRIDE SHOW



(PAGE 2-3)  
ISLAND SKY. Photograph



(PAGE 4-5)  
BACKGROUND FOR THE ANIMATED FILM,  
pen on a tablecloth



(PAGE 6-7)  
BACKGROUND FOR THE ANIMATED FILM,  
pen on a tablecloth by Mathieu Lauftrav and Alex Aliot



(PAGE 84)  
"DIE NIBELUNGEN." Fritz Lang (1923-24)  
Akg.images, publicity of Ulstein-akg



(PAGE 88)  
"DIE NIBELUNGEN." Fritz Lang (1923-24)  
Ulstein-akg, publicity of Ulstein-akg



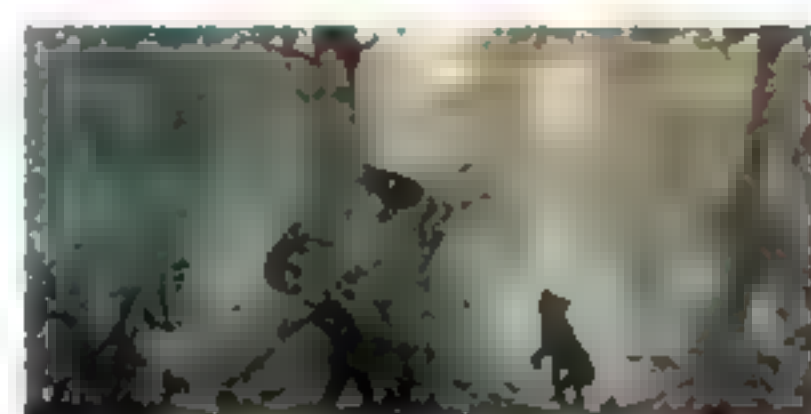
(PAGE 114)  
BRUNHILDE, illustration from "The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie"  
by Richard Wagner, 1910 by Arthur Rackham (1867-1939)  
Private Collection/©Chris Beetles, London, U.K. - The Penguin Art Library



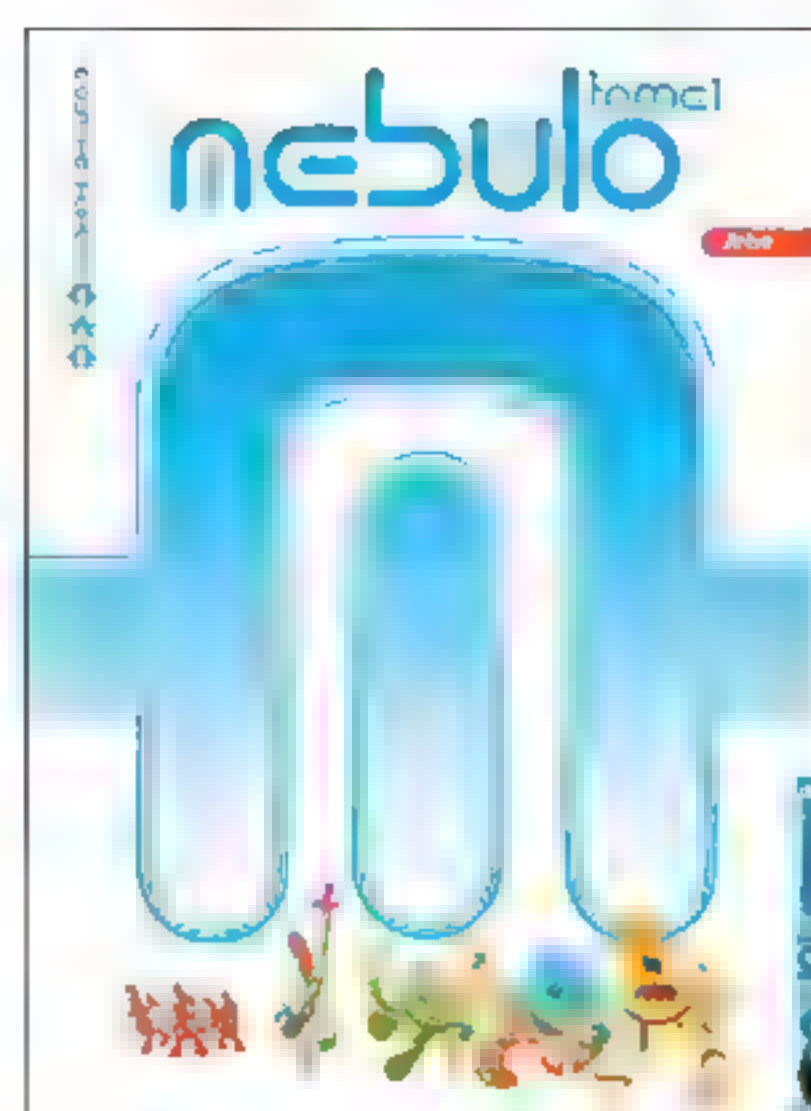
(PAGE 130)  
WOTAN, illustration from "The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie"  
by Richard Wagner, 1910 by Arthur Rackham (1867-1939)  
Private Collection



(PAGE 118)  
"..." by Ivan Shishkin



(PAGE 119)  
MORNING IN THE PINE FOREST.  
Ivan Shishkin and Konstantin Savitski, 1886



(PAGE 148)  
THE ZIGFRIDE SHOW:  
Christophe "Zébé" Londelet. Pen on a tablecloth  
READ NÉBULO!



# THANK YOU

All my thanks to the film's entire development team, who helped Siegfried grow up.

---

Equal thanks to all of my most patient readers:

Frank Chapuis  
Eric Chauveau  
Sylvie Deshours  
Xavier Dorison  
Nadege Jean  
Laure Kloetzer  
Laurent Kloetzer  
Audrey Leprince  
Fabien Nury  
Richard Marazano  
Frederique de V

And of course to Valérie Vossaert and her future Valkyrie.

---

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---

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Eric "Corso" Chauveau  
Sylvain "Green" Dorget  
Nadine "Summerset" Le Moing  
Ilan "Simmons" Msika  
Nyannrlathotep Pallatier

Alex Causse and the GT, my other favorite focus group.

My brothers in arms  
Mathieu Lauffray  
Patrick Pion  
Robin Recht

And above all, Florence HL



Hope!

# ALEX





## SIEGFRIED: TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

The DVD-Video included in the current edition contains the first minutes of the animated *Siegfried*, made for the feature film in development.

PRODUCTION	Pendragon Imageforge
DIRECTION	Alex Alice Les Studios Bibo Films
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER	Pascal Chevé Louis Viau
VISUAL DEVELOPMENT	Alex Alice and Mathieu Lauffray Horse created by Claire Wendling
ART DIRECTION	Mathieu Lauffray
STORYBOARD	Alex Alice
EDITING	Pascal Chevé Guillaume Moreels Sébastien Prangère
MODEL SHEET AND 2D ANIMATION	Antoine Antin Alexandre Hesse Habib Louati Pascal Cheve
2D ANIMATION ASSISTANTS	Franck Bonay Marianne Lebel Gregory Lecocq Thierry Peres Marie-Cécile Peres
LAYOUT AND PAINTING	Cédric Marquis Marion Crepel
MODELING AND 3D ANIMATION	Julien Georgel Norbert Rozowski
SPECIAL EFFECTS	Guillaume Moreels
BACKGROUNDS	Patrice Suau
ADDITIONAL BACKGROUNDS	Alex Alice Julien Georgel Mathieu Lauffray
COMPOSITING	Jérôme Ducasse Cedric Marquis Guillaume Moreels
SOUND EFFECTS AND SOUND MIXING	Lucas Albert





MUSIC      Das Rheingold: Vorspiel  
Götterdämmerung: Prolog  
Richard Wagner  
Wiener Philharmoniker  
Sir George Solti  
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The Planets: Mars, the Bringer of War  
Gustav Holst  
Orchestre Symphonique de Montreal  
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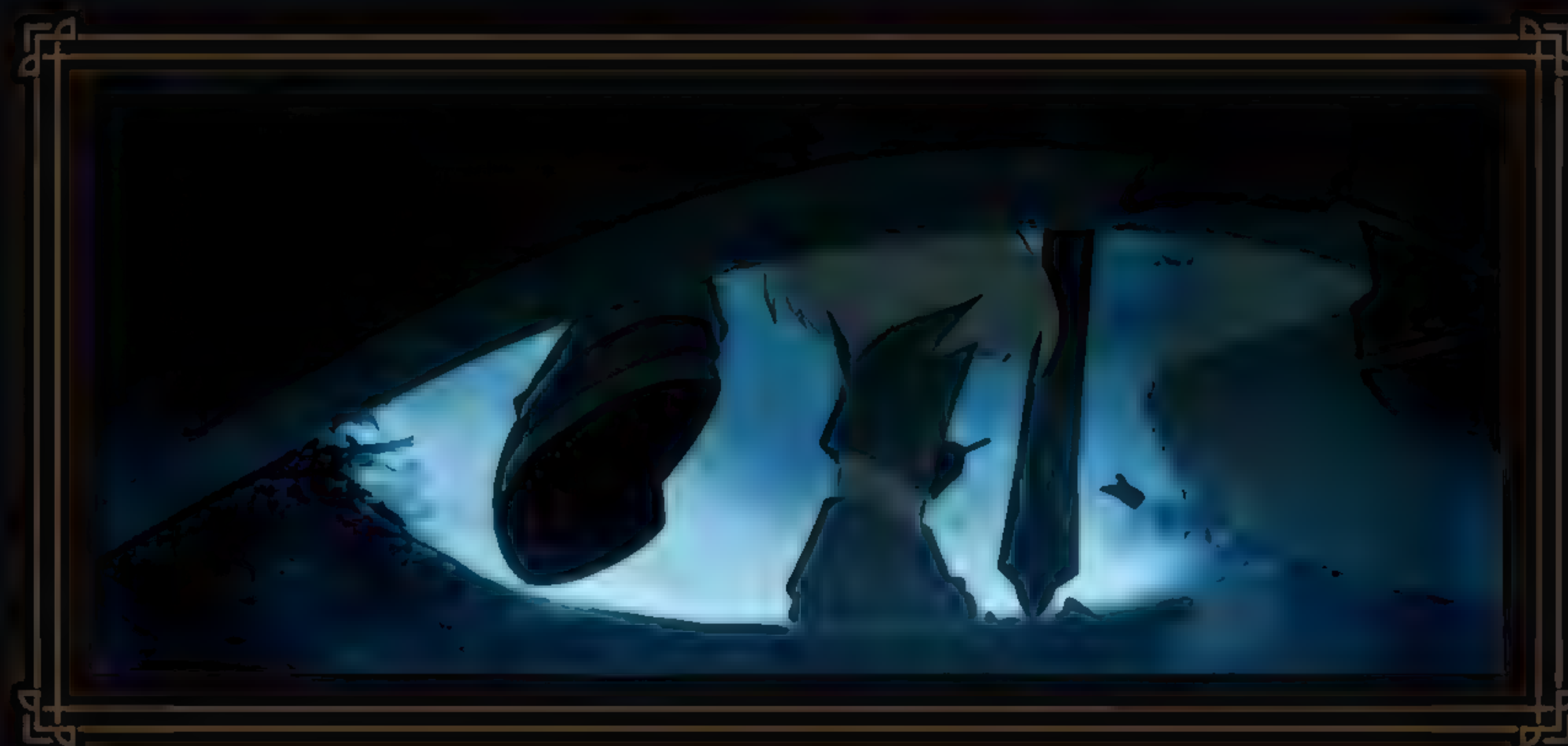
TITLES      Nadine Lé Moing  
Loic Laurelut

PRODUCTION MANAGED BY      Bibo Films:  
Pascal Chevé and Constance Thubin  
Pendragon Imageforge:  
Adrien Moisson and Célia Salsi

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Pascal Rodier, Claude de Saint Vincent and Valérie Vossaert.

DEVELOPED WITH THE SUPPORT OF      National Center for Cinematography  
Groupe Dargaud  
Universal Music

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*"If I must go away from you  
and timidly avoid you,  
if you must split  
what once linked us;  
if a half of yourself  
must keep its distance from you,  
that once was wholly yours,  
do not forget it, you god!"*

THE VALKYRIE, ACT 3, SCENE 3



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